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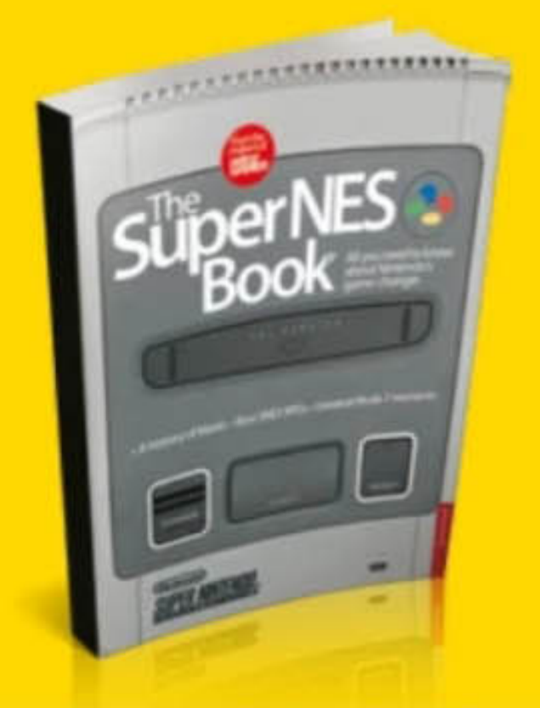
TURN OVER FOR
The Super NES Book



THE NES BOOK

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NINTENDO'S ICONIC CONSOLE

From the makers of retro GAMER

SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
Nintendo
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM™
NES VERSION
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- MARIO, METROID, ZELDA & MORE
- HOW NINTENDO CHANGED THE WORLD

100% UNOFFICIAL

Digital Edition

FUTURE

SECOND EDITION

Welcome to

THE NES BOOK

The Nintendo Entertainment System was a remarkable success for Nintendo. Redesigned for the Western market – it was known in Japan as the Famicom – it arrived following the great videogame crash and helped to reignite interest in the console market. It wasn't quite as successful in Europe, but in Japan and America it reigned supreme, and eventually went on to sell over 60 million units - not bad for a machine that many wrote off as a toy when it was first released.

Many huge franchises like *Metroid*, *The Legend Of Zelda* and *Mega Man* started off on the NES and it helped turn Nintendo into a huge force in the console market. Indeed, for a long time it was Nintendo's most successful home console, being only eclipsed by the staggering success of the Wii. It remains greatly loved by many gamers and developers and we wanted to put together a book that reflected that love. With that in mind, we've personally selected the greatest NES content to ever appear in Retro Gamer magazine. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed creating it.

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In association with retro GAMER magazine

FUTURE

THE NES BOOK

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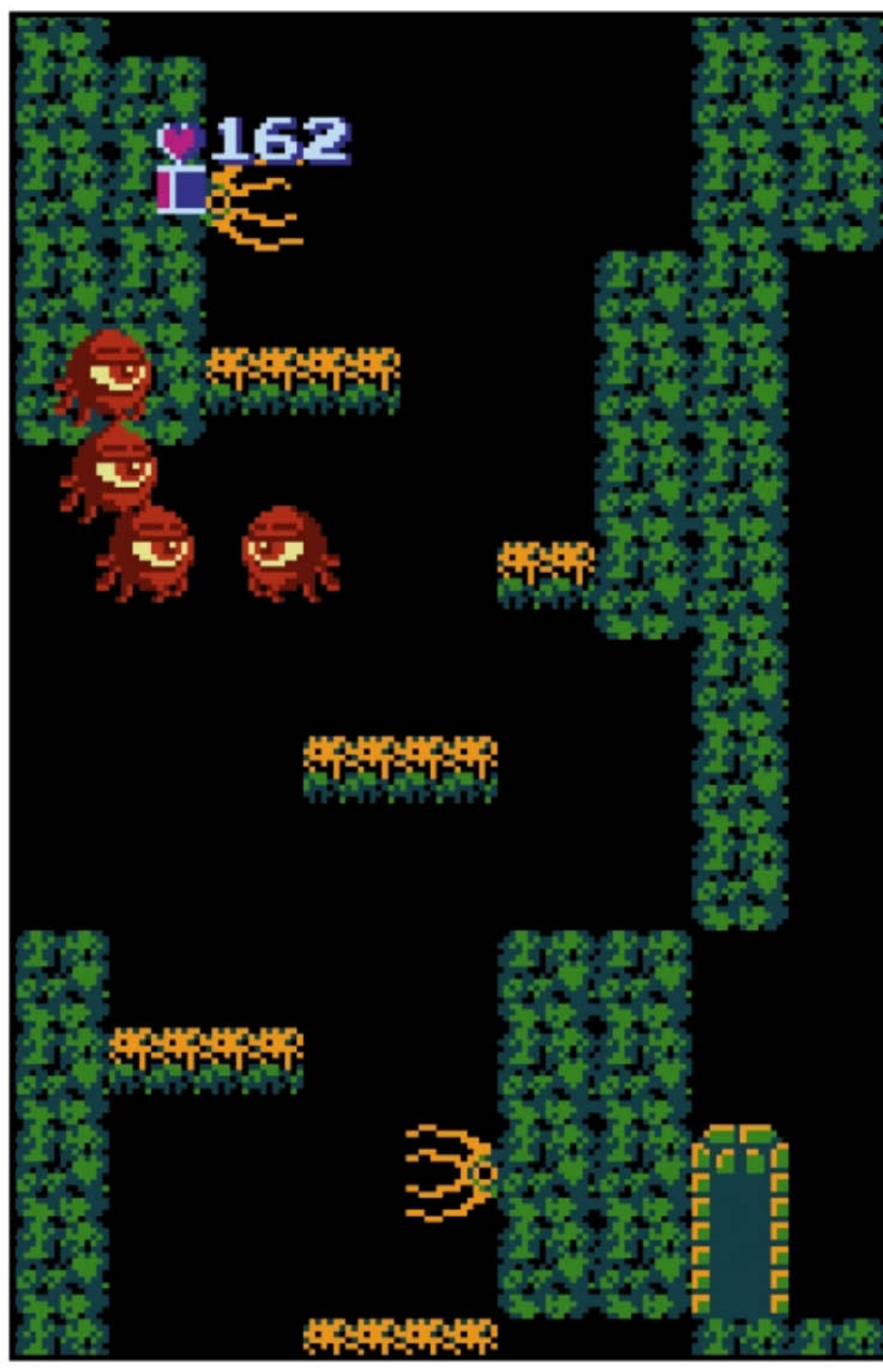

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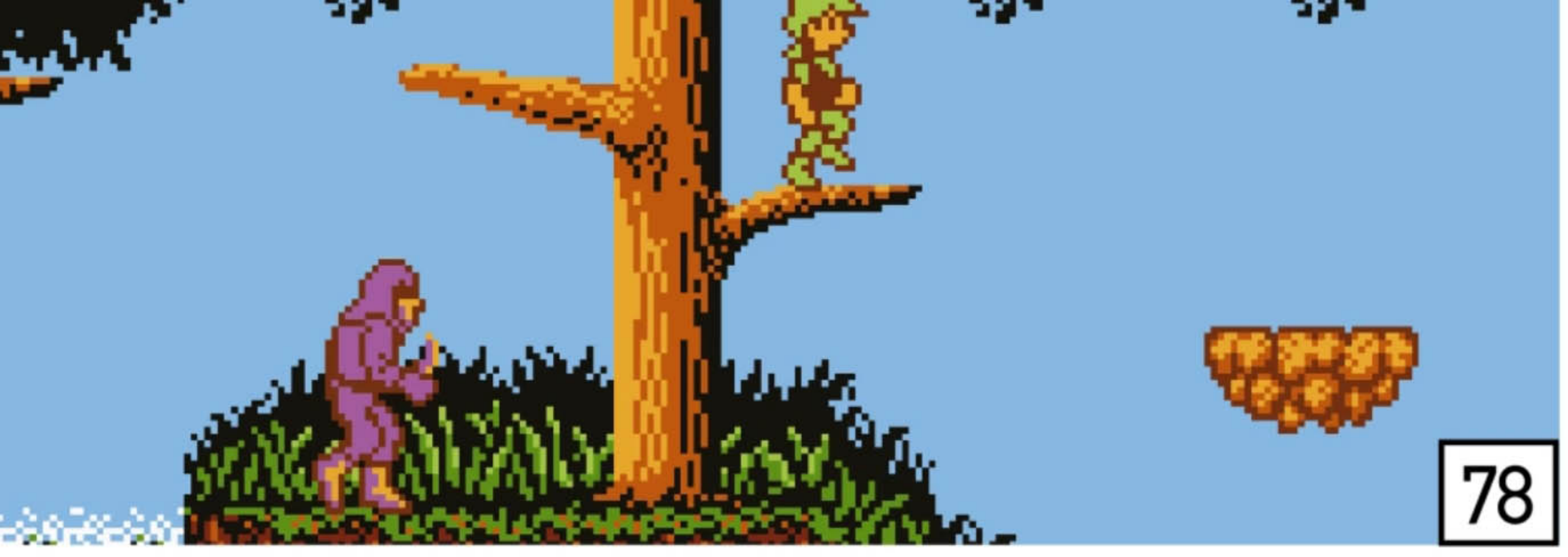
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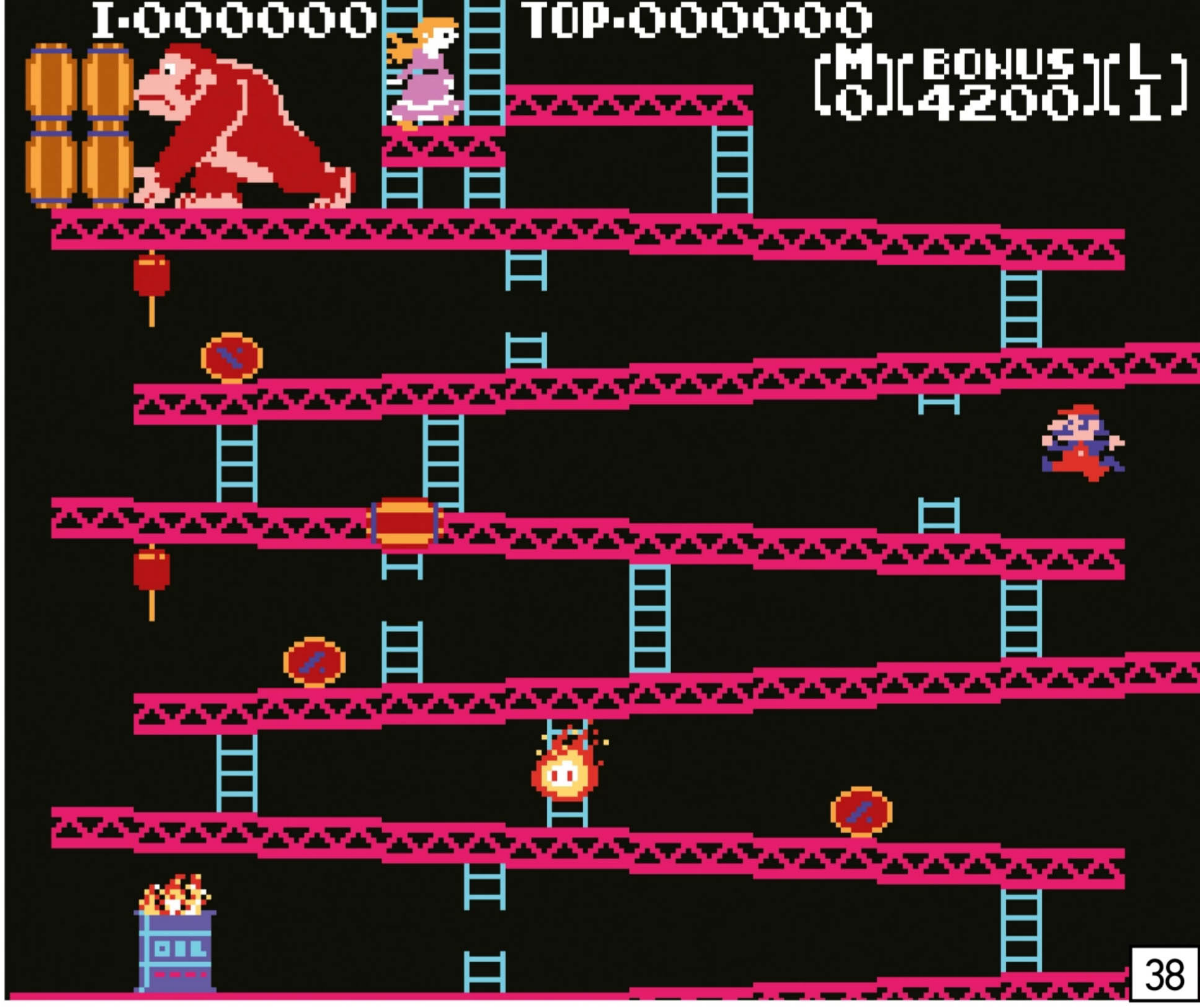

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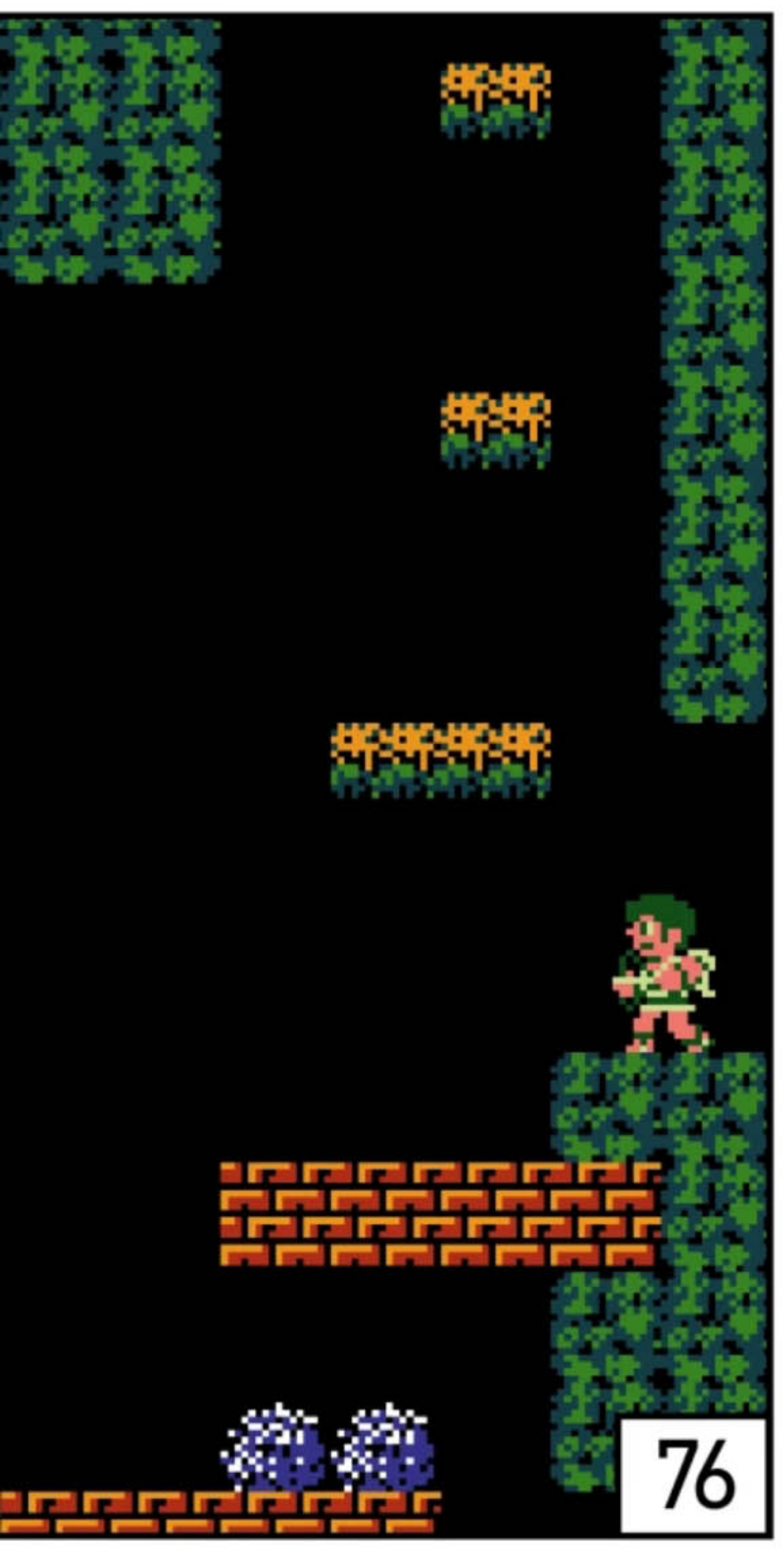
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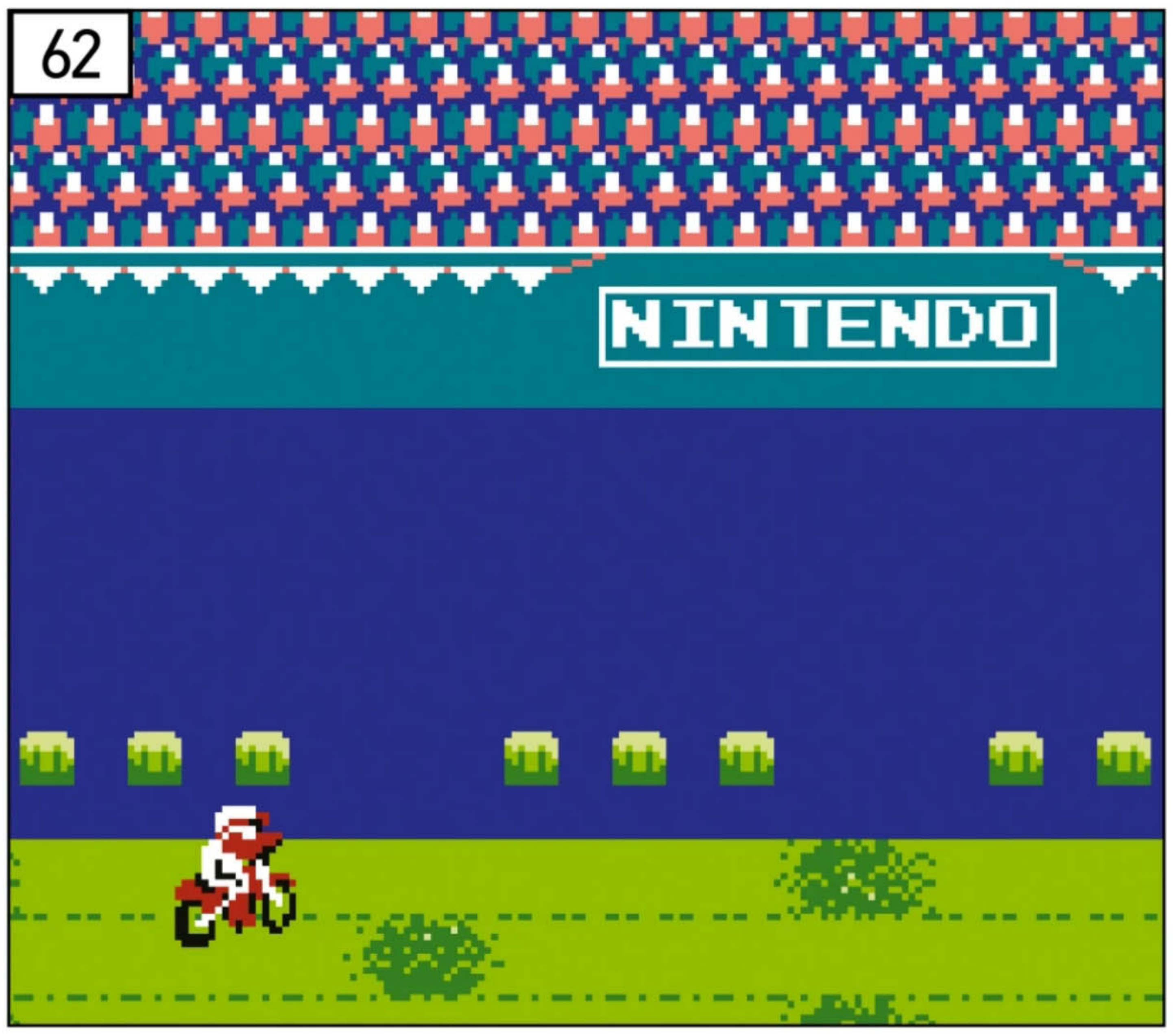
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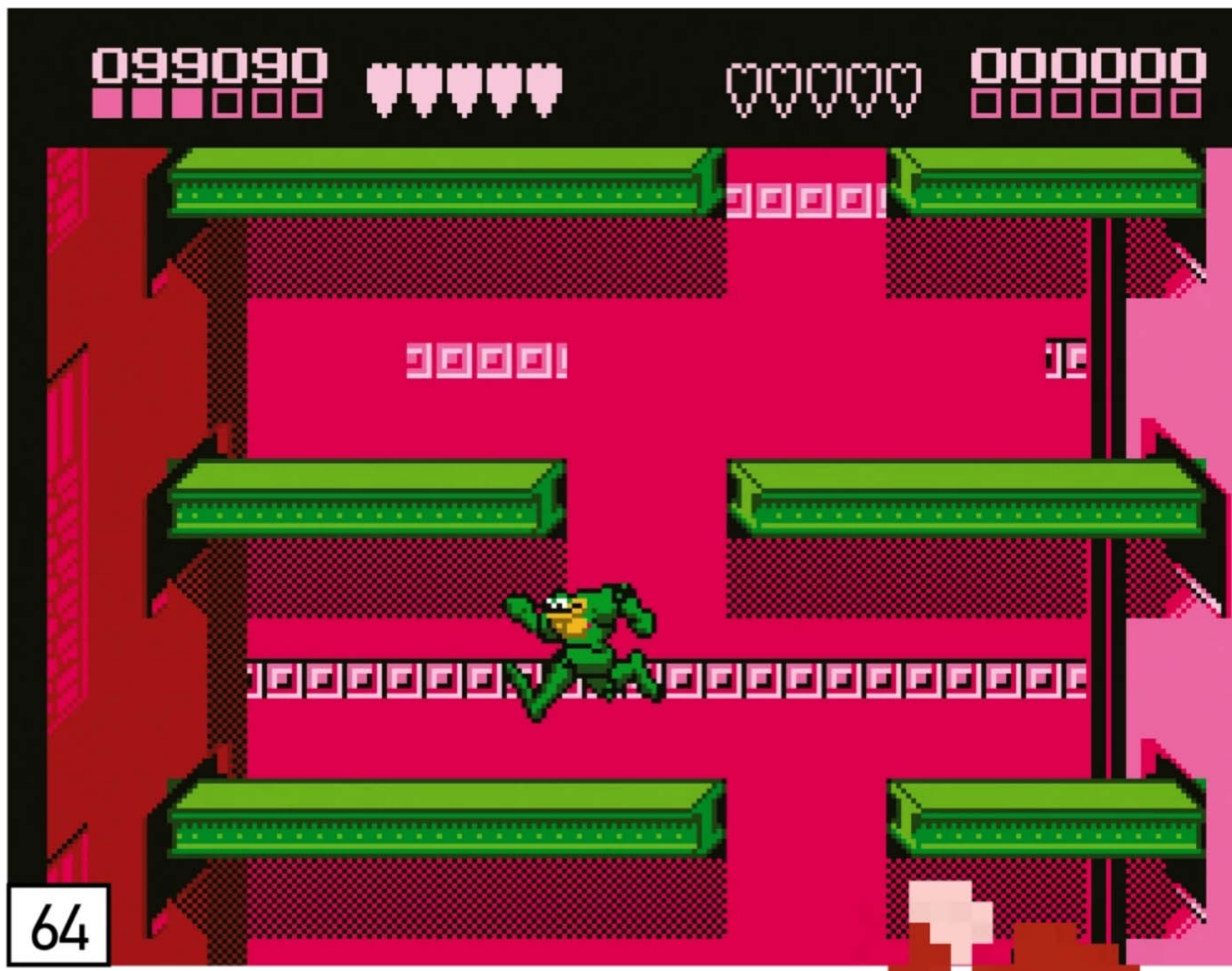

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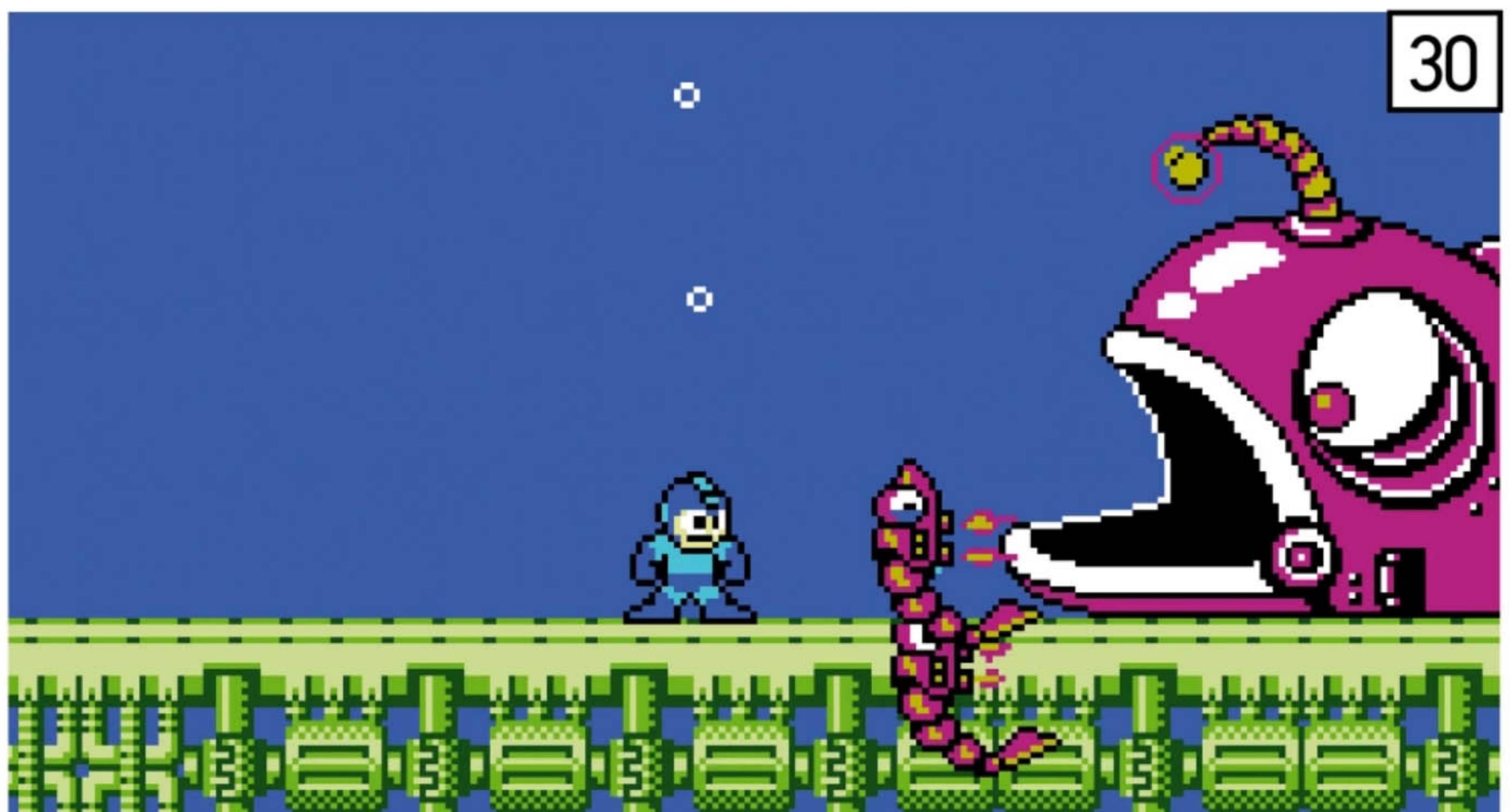
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OVER 30 YEARS

When Masayuki Uemura came to the UK in 2016 to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the NES, we sent Paul Drury to get the inside story of Nintendo's iconic first cartridge-based console from the man who designed it

Masayuki Uemura, the NES' creator, gives his head a little shake and laughs. "I thought the NES taking off was impossible," he admits. "I think Mr. Arakawa, [first president of Nintendo Of America], never thought it would either. But in the entertainment industry, the unexpected happens. I feel so grateful people still play the NES. I can't believe I'm here!"

Professor Uemura is sitting opposite us in the conference room of the National Videogame Arcade in Nottingham, speaking through his affable interpreter Akinori 'Aki' Nakamura. He has been invited by the NVA to give a talk about the creation of the Famicom, renamed the Nintendo Entertainment System or NES for its Western release, and seems genuinely surprised with the love that the console still generates three decades after it made it to our shores. The event has been sold out for weeks because though in the UK the NES itself never sold in the huge numbers it did in America, we all know what came next. Its worldwide success – 62 million units shifted puts it in the top ten of bestselling consoles of all time – led to the SNES, N64 and the Wii and first introduced us to such perennial favourites as *The Legend Of Zelda*, *Final Fantasy* and, of course, the all-conquering *Super Mario Bros.*. The NES truly announced Nintendo's arrival in the console business.

Retro Gamer has been granted a meeting with the man behind Nintendo's first cartridge-based machine before his talk later in the evening. Uemura and Aki, both dressed in smart suits, bow politely and offer us their business cards. We nod awkwardly and in lieu of a calling card of our own, we present them with some locally brewed ale, which elicits slightly bemused but appreciative smiles. The mood suitably lightened, Uemura explains that just like Ralph Baer, the father of the home ▶

» Masayuki Uemura is the man who designed the Famicom/NES. He also created its 16-bit follow-up.

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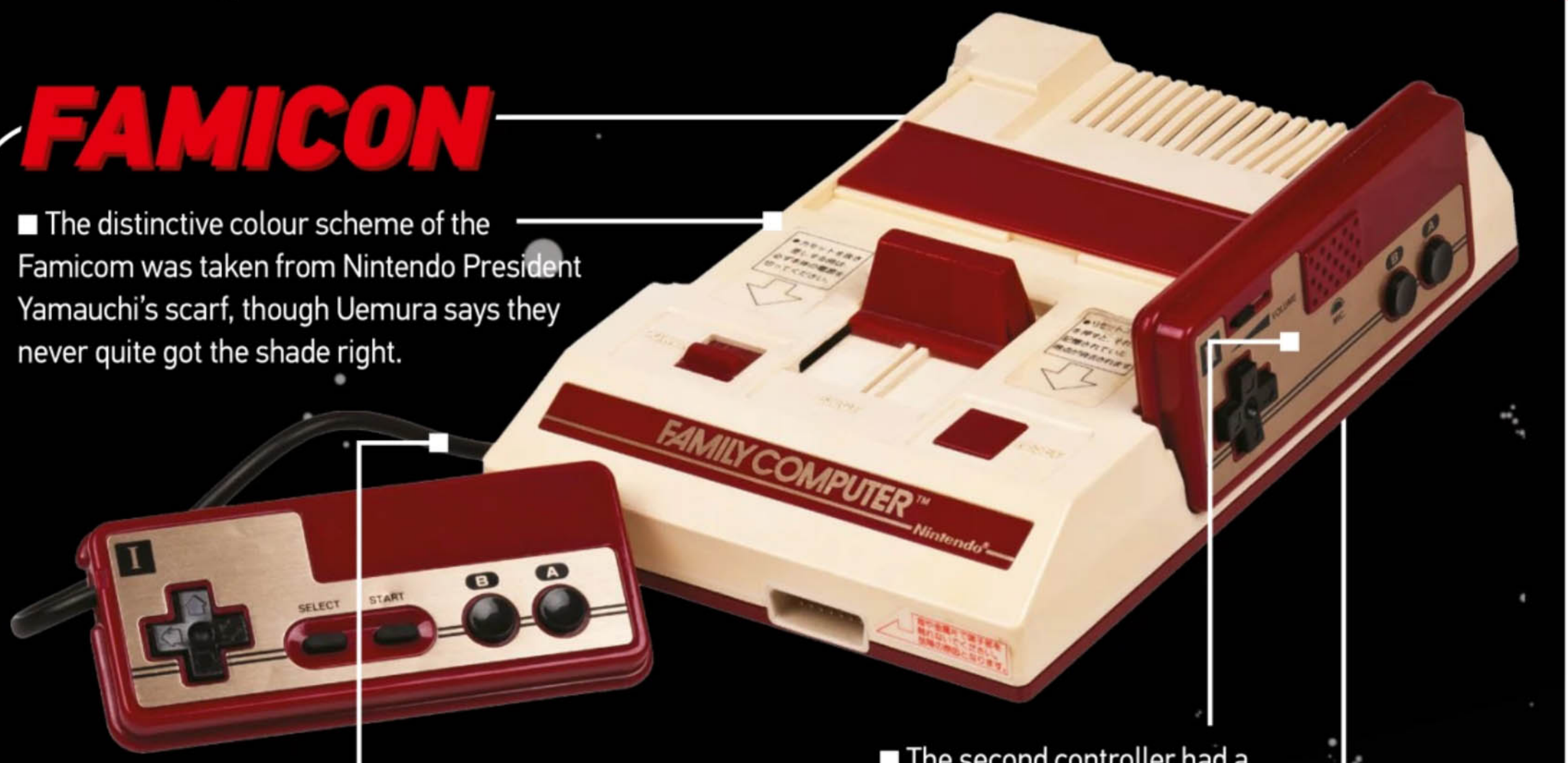
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

The many faces of Uemura's 8-bit console

FAMICON

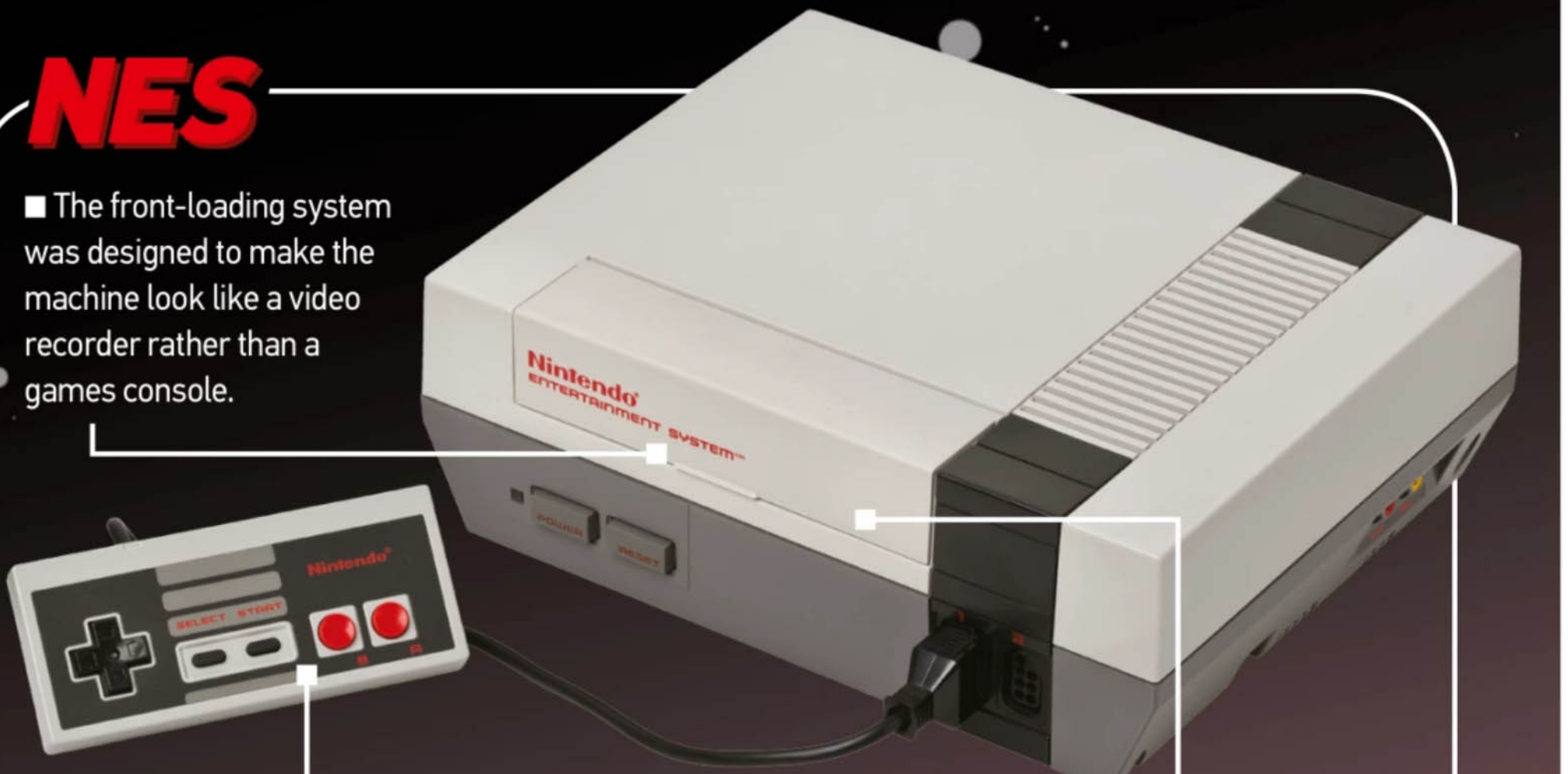


■ The distinctive colour scheme of the Famicom was taken from Nintendo President Yamauchi's scarf, though Uemura says they never quite got the shade right.

■ The controllers were wired into the console to save on production costs and could be clipped into place on either side of the machine.

■ The second controller had a built-in microphone which could be used as an input device, an idea clearly ahead of its time.

NES

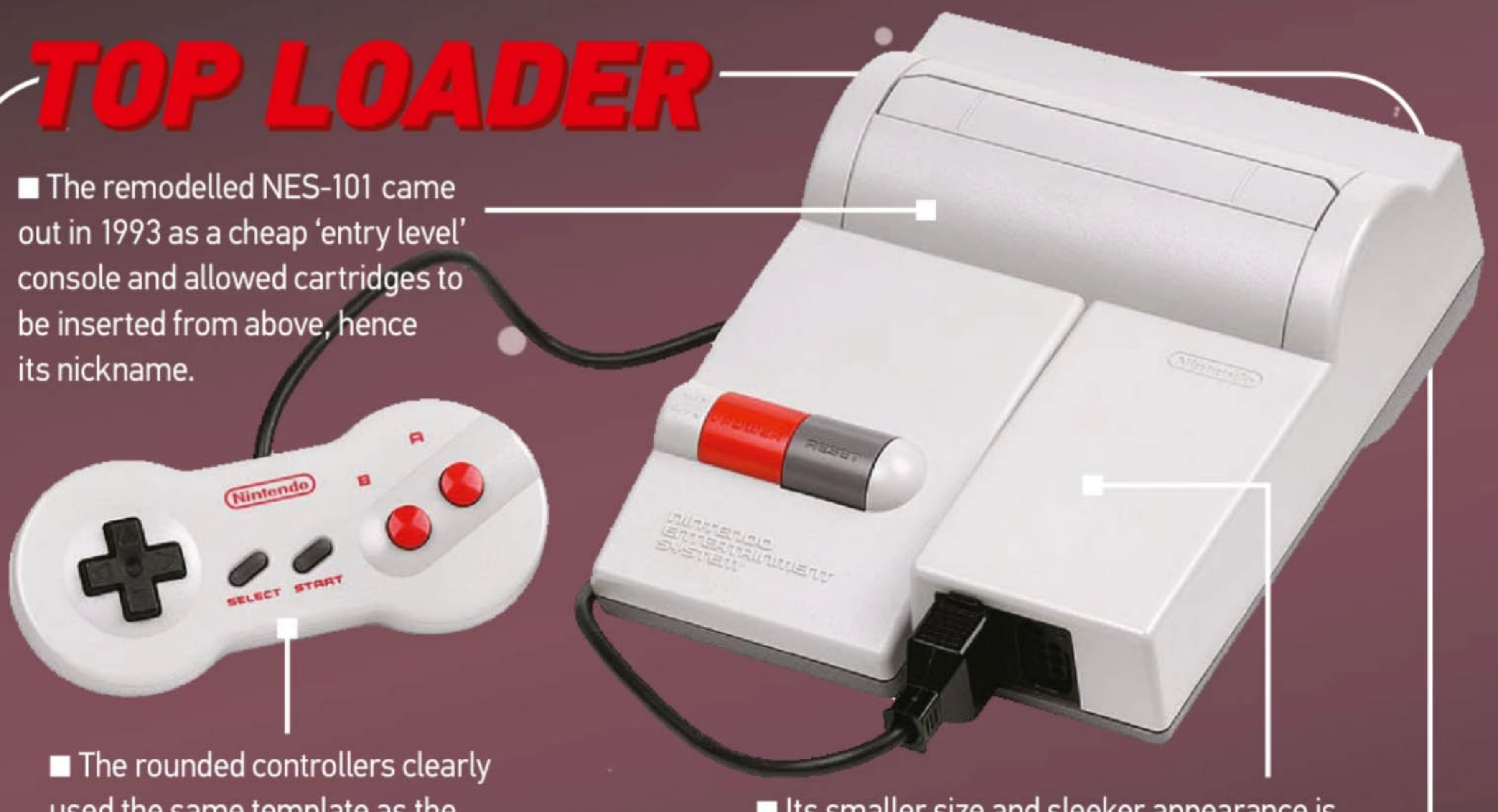


■ The front-loading system was designed to make the machine look like a video recorder rather than a games console.

■ The restyled controllers adopted the colour scheme and more angular look of the NES and could now be plugged in and out.

■ Cartridges were shielded once inserted to discourage children with wandering fingers getting an electric shock.

TOP LOADER



■ The remodelled NES-101 came out in 1993 as a cheap 'entry level' console and allowed cartridges to be inserted from above, hence its nickname.

■ The rounded controllers clearly used the same template as the SNES and were considerably more comfortable in the hand.

■ Its smaller size and sleeker appearance is something of a nod to design of the original Famicom, though grey still prevails.

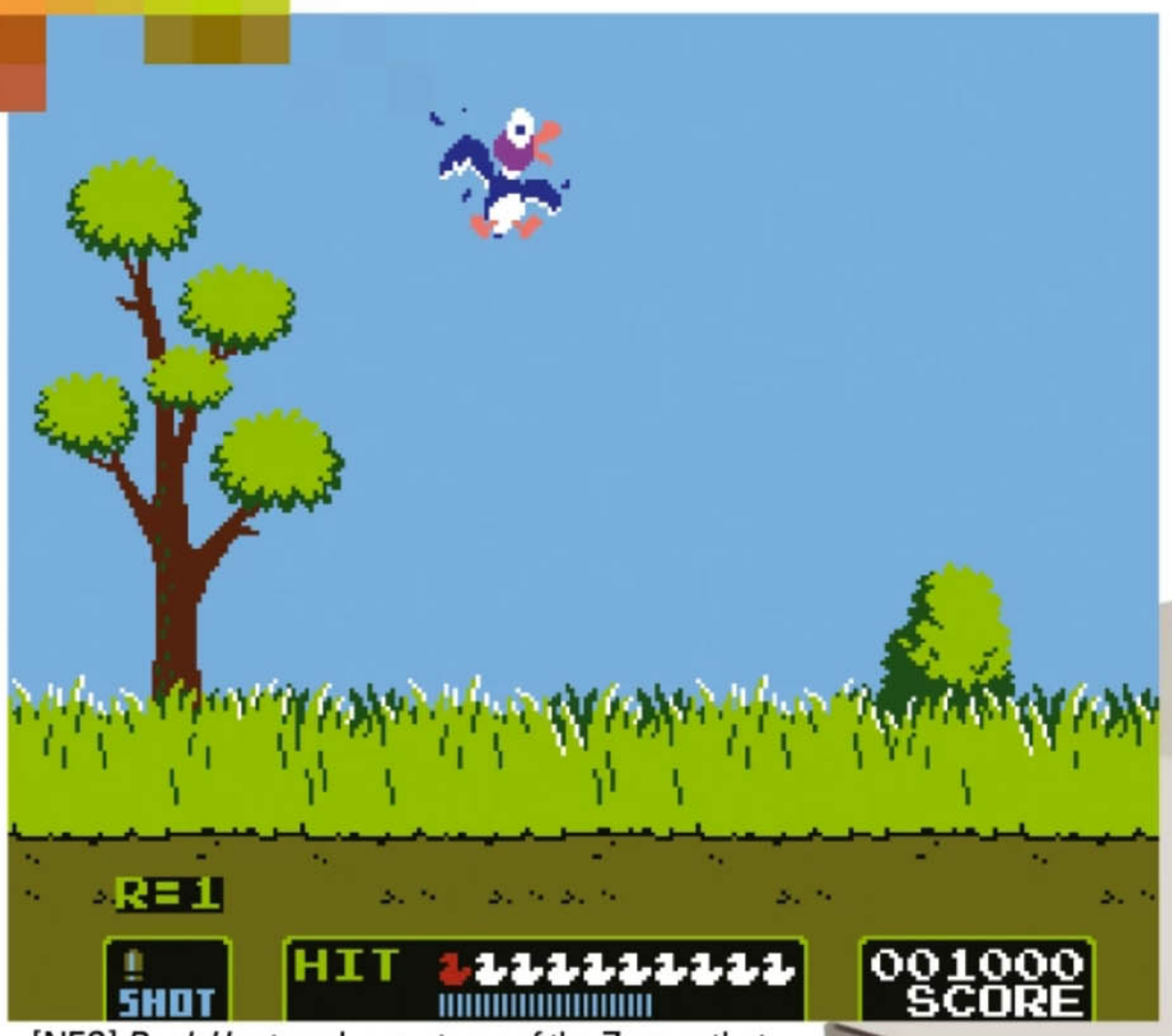
▶ console, his background was in television technology rather than games.

"I went to Sharp as an employee before Nintendo because I wanted to develop TV hardware," he says. "The fact I knew a lot about the hardware of a TV really helped when developing videogames. TV engineering is a good background for console development!"

Of course Nintendo itself was not yet involved in the emerging world of videogames when he joined in the early Seventies. The company had a long history of producing Hanafuda cards, something Uemura credits with instilling an obsession with the quality of Nintendo's output. These playing cards were used amongst the gambling fraternity and if your product was shoddy, you risked the ire of some potentially unsavoury types. "And you could play a lot of different games with them," he adds, "like a videogame console."

The famous 'Nintendo Seal Of Quality' may indeed have its origins in the ancient cards which the business had been built upon, though by the early Seventies the company was starting to experiment with electronic toys. One of the first projects Uemura was involved with was a lightgun game and Nintendo had some success in the public arena with its Laser Clay Shooting System and *Wild Gunman*, the latter game combining this lightgun technology with a full motion videos of revolver-toting cowboys.

In the home market, 1974 saw Nintendo secure the rights to distribute the original games console, the Magnavox Odyssey, in Japan and so it was no surprise when it began releasing its own standalone TV games, which offered various flavours of *Pong* and sold in their millions in the latter half of the decade. Nintendo even produced dedicated machines such as *Breakout* clone *Block Breaker* and *Racing 112*, a generic driving game with its own steering wheel attached to the console but Uemura remembers the arrival of the all-conquering *Space Invaders* in 1978 made the company refocus on its arcade business. After a few moderate successes such as *Space Firebird* and *Space Fever* and a notable failure in *Radar Scope*, a coin-op shooter he worked on which left American arcade gamers distinctly unimpressed, Nintendo tried a different



» [NES] *Duck Hunt* made great use of the Zapper that came with the NES and it still plays well today.

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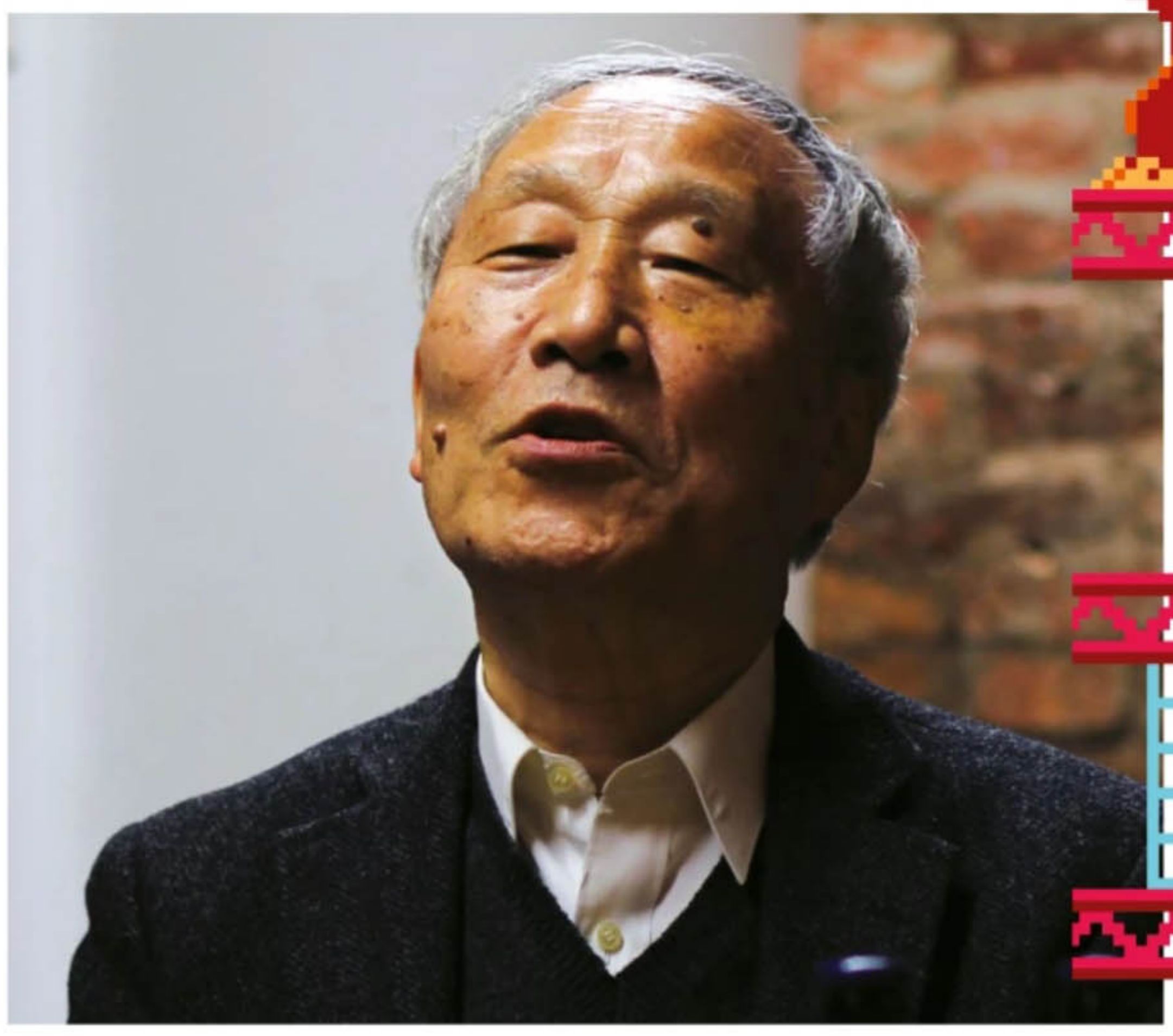
» [NES] *Super Mario Bros.* was an important release for Nintendo and massively boosted sales of the system.



» Uemura has been travelling the world talking about his famous console. He remains staggered by its incredible success.

approach. Repurposing the 'fire' button as a 'jump' function, *Donkey Kong* was a huge hit in 1981 and had a profound effect not just on Nintendo's fortunes in the coin-op world, but in its console ambitions too.

"We licensed *Donkey Kong* to Coleco for their home console and of course we needed to evaluate it," smiles Uemura. "Coleco was a toy company, like Nintendo, so we had a long history of looking at what they were doing, not just with videogames. We looked at the specifications of their hardware and what they'd done with our licensed product. They had done a very good version of *Donkey Kong*, [quite] like the arcade game. That was a surprise! It made us feel confident…"

The commendable version of *Donkey Kong* that appeared on the ColecoVision not only became the 'killer app' for that console, it suggested to Nintendo the commercial viability of producing its own machine. Uemura, who at this stage was heading up the videogame division, certainly saw the potential of a cartridge-based system and, as early as 1981, began work on designs for what would become the Famicom, though not everyone shared his optimism.

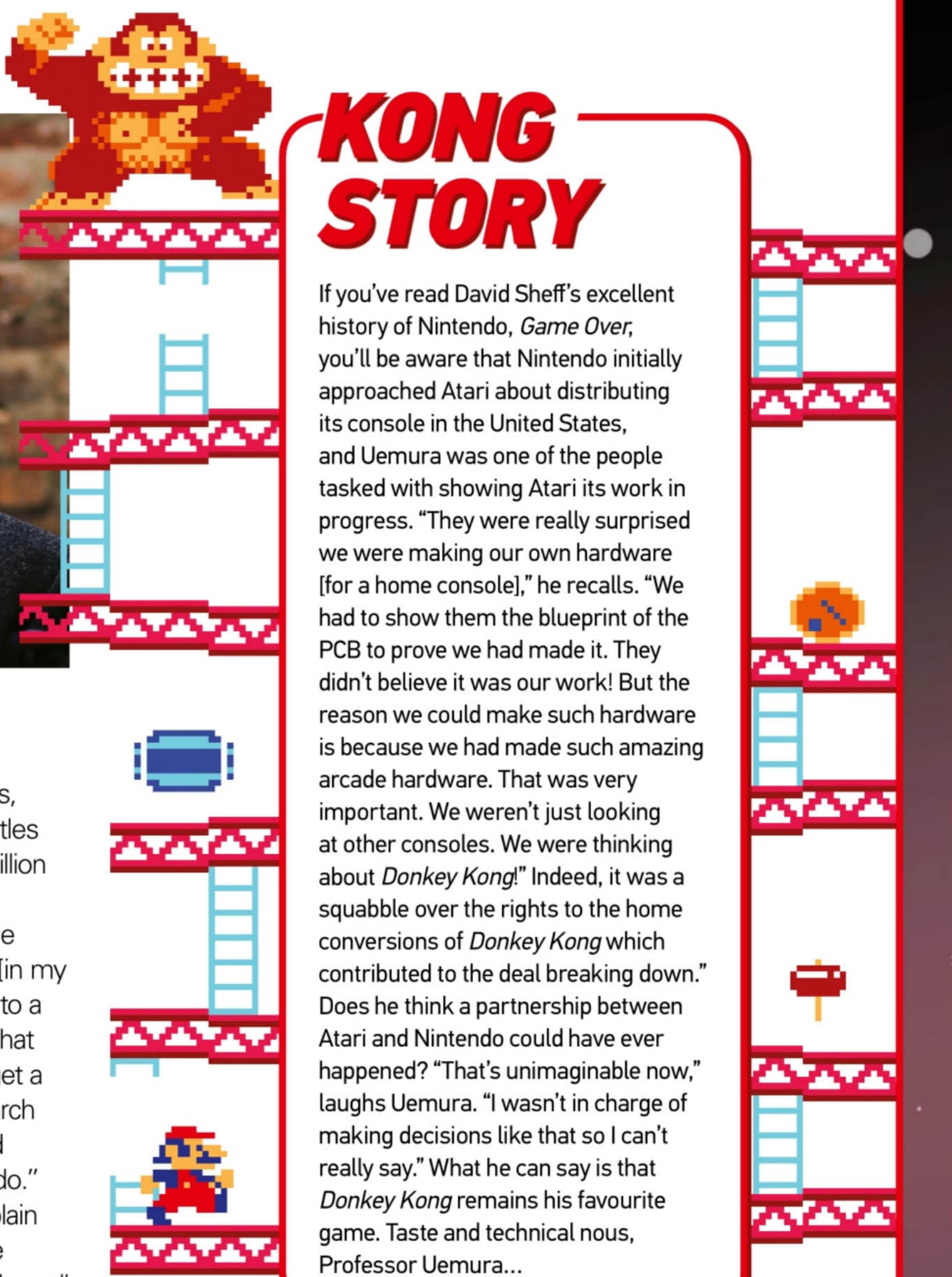
"Back then at Nintendo, no one was imagining we'd make a console with interchangeable cartridges because Game & Watch was huge," he says. "Everyone thought that was the kind of product we'd make in the future. All the engineers I had were dispatched over to that division to help them out. I couldn't do the work I wanted to do because of that."

The huge success of Nintendo's handheld series, particularly at the beginning of the Eighties when titles like *Turtle Bridge* and *Snoopy Tennis* sold over a million units, may have hindered progress on his console plans in the short term, but it gave Uemura valuable thinking space. "Because of the lack of personnel [in my division], I couldn't work, which meant I could talk to a lot of people outside of the company to find out what was going on. Of course, I talked to Atari. I could get a lot of information about console games. This research time was very precious if you think about it. I could come up with a specific idea of what I wanted to do."

Uemura leans back in his chair and starts to explain the thought processes which would determine the internal workings of his console. He wanted a CPU small enough to allow a sound chip to be integrated onto the board, thus keeping costs down, and Nintendo had a relationship with chip manufacturer Ricoh, whose 6502 processor would fit the bill. "But it was a huge problem within the company because *Donkey Kong* was made with a Z80," sighs Uemura, "so using a 6502, we couldn't use the source code. It was like throwing away a precious resource! I decided to do it anyway as chief engineer. Others said I could only do that because I wasn't programming it myself! It did mean we had to do *Donkey Kong* from scratch…"

At least Uemura considered the needs of those poor programmers tasked with converting the game to a new processor by consulting colleague Shigeru Miyamoto, the man behind *Donkey Kong*, when determining the colour palette of the Famicom. "He knew which colours would be needed to recreate his games," says Uemura, "and he would tell me how many colours the console would need [to display]. I would ask and he would answer. That was how we worked!"

With some key hardware decisions made, Uemura and Nintendo also settled on cartridges as the storage medium for the console. "We had decided its sole function was to play videogames. If it's dedicated to that, we won't need to alter data, so we chose ROM over RAM but then in 1983, the USA had a big videogame shake-up with Atari. The media thought a games-only console was out of date. There was a buzz about home computers and Apple was getting big, too. I was afraid we wouldn't get media attention so I ▶



KONG STORY

If you've read David Sheff's excellent history of Nintendo, *Game Over*, you'll be aware that Nintendo initially approached Atari about distributing its console in the United States, and Uemura was one of the people tasked with showing Atari its work in progress. "They were really surprised we were making our own hardware [for a home console]," he recalls. "We had to show them the blueprint of the PCB to prove we had made it. They didn't believe it was our work! But the reason we could make such hardware is because we had made such amazing arcade hardware. That was very important. We weren't just looking at other consoles. We were thinking about *Donkey Kong*!" Indeed, it was a squabble over the rights to the home conversions of *Donkey Kong* which contributed to the deal breaking down." Does he think a partnership between Atari and Nintendo could have ever happened? "That's unimaginable now," laughs Uemura. "I wasn't in charge of making decisions like that so I can't really say." What he can say is that *Donkey Kong* remains his favourite game. Taste and technical nous, Professor Uemura…

» [NES] *Double Dragon* uses a limited number of tiles, but careful repetition provides a nice image.

» [NES] Complex multi-sprite images like this gorilla robot look nice, but are prone to flickering.

WRESTLEMANIA CHALLENGE
ARCADE GAME
TOHO CO.,LTD
GODZILLA
SUPER MARIO BROS. 2
SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
Nintendo
SELECT START
B A
Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM™
NES VERSION
POWER
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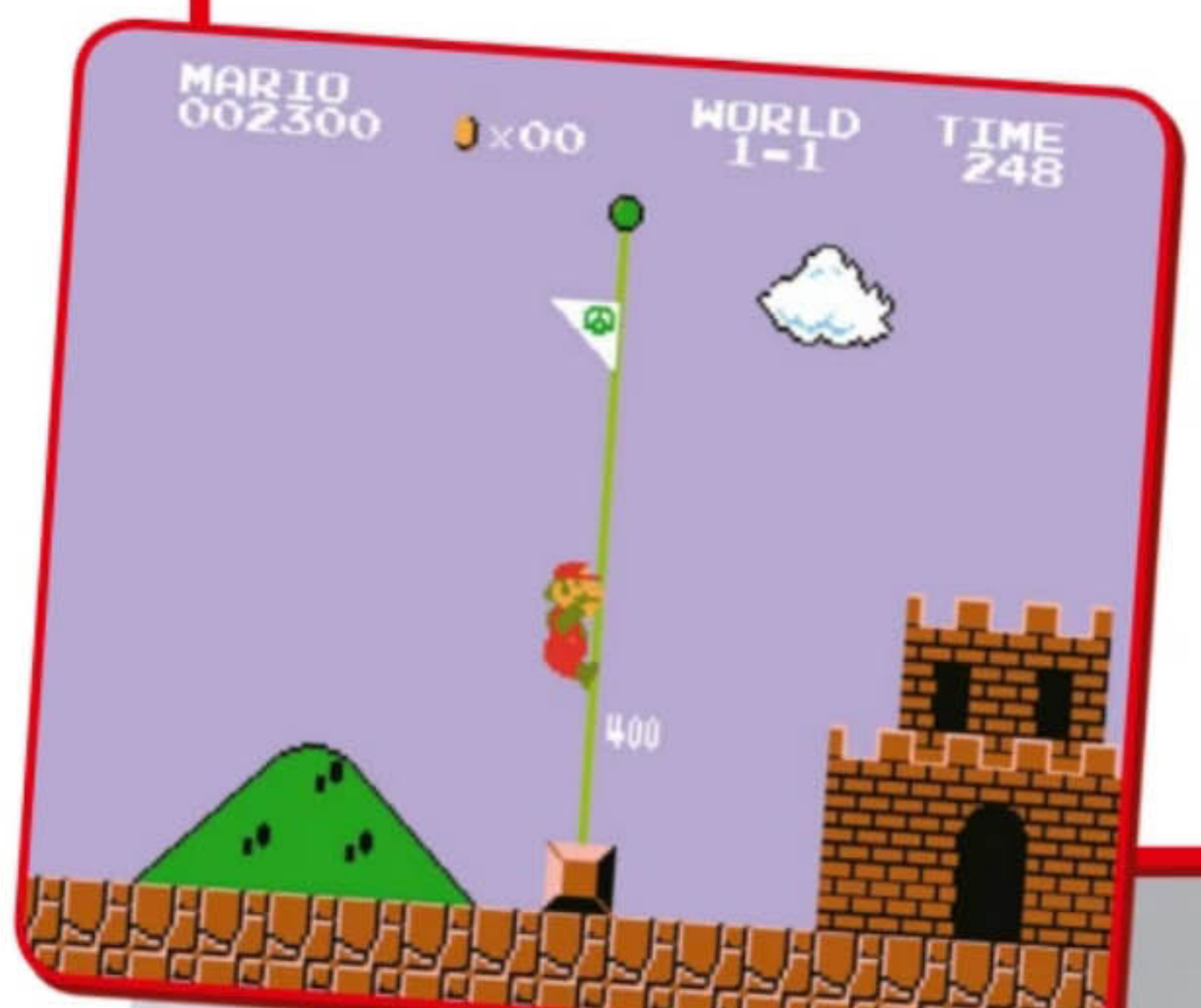
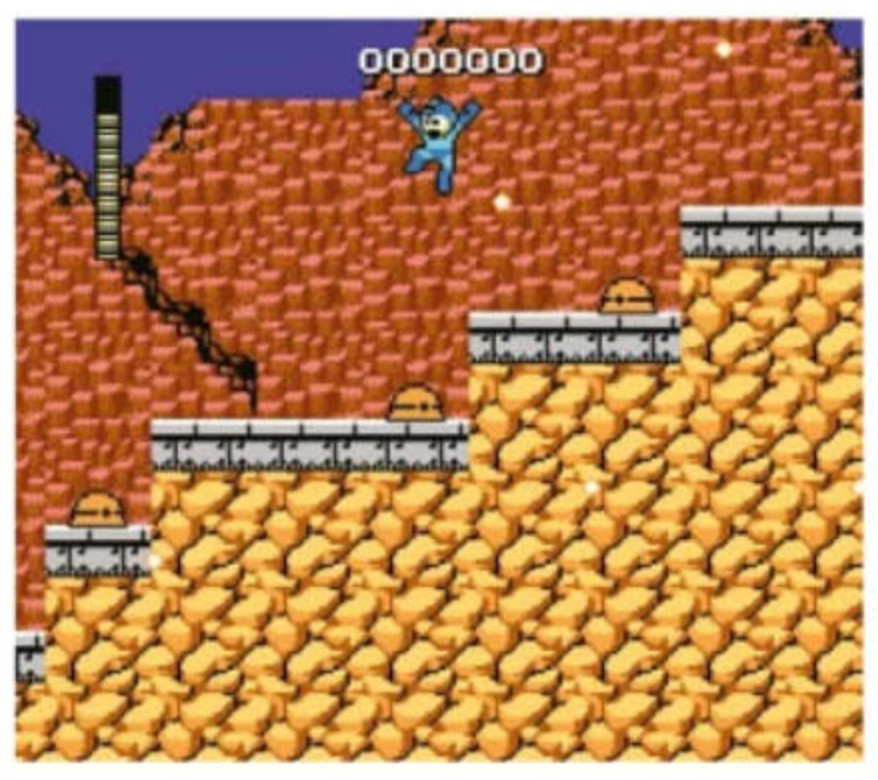
FRANCHISE STARTERS

The hit game series' that started on the NES

SUPER MARIO BROS.

■ Of course he had appeared in *Donkey Kong*, albeit with a different name and profession, and Mario and Luigi had already starred in an frenetic coin-op, but this is where the brothers really showed the world what they could do. *Super Mario World* may have topped our chart of your favourite games of all time but this is where it all began.





MEGA MAN

■ Rock hard – that's the man himself and the level of difficulty typical in this long-running series which debuted in 1987. The side-scrolling run-and-gun action of the original has you leaping platforms and blasting foes with a weapon handily attached to his arm. Defeating bosses rewards you with new weapons and so the carnage continues.

LEGEND OF ZELDA

■ After Mario, Link must surely be Nintendo's best-known hero and he too began his princess-saving career on the NES. The original game was a launch title for the Famicom Disk System in 1986 before appearing in cartridge form for the NES a year later and established the action adventure template for this superlative series.

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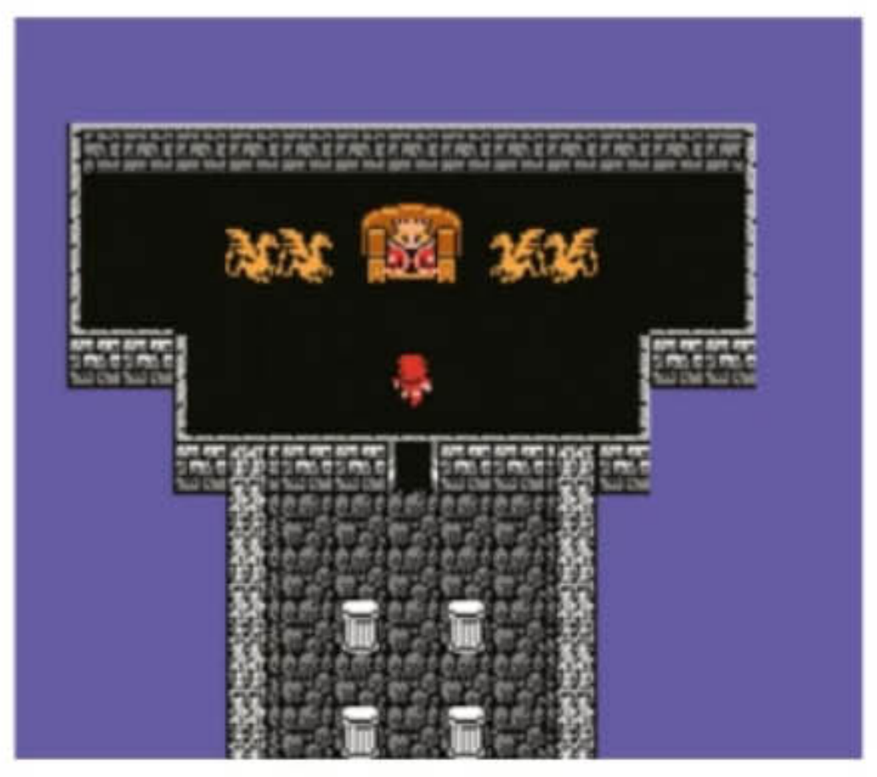
CASTLEVANIA

■ Another game that first appeared on the Disk System, it arrived on cartridge for the NES in 1987 and introduced Simon Belmont, vampire hunter and whip-cracker extraordinaire, to the gaming world. The first game is a solid platformer but if you're new to the series, you may want to start with *Symphony Of The Night* on the PlayStation.

FINAL FANTASY

■ With the 15th instalment now out in the world, not to mention the host of spin-off titles, this may seem the most inappropriately-named franchise in gaming history but when Hironobu Sakaguchi created the original for Square in 1987, it was reputedly his last gasp attempt to have a hit game. Its success means we've been playing them ever since.



METROID

■ The series with the most famous reveal, in both senses of the word, in videogame history, began on the Disk System in 1986. Combining exploration, combat, platforming, atmospheric aesthetics and a little brainwork too, this laid the foundations for some truly excellent episodes, particularly *Super Metroid* for the SNES.

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▶ explained Family BASIC was on the way [to make the Famicom] like a home computer."

Nintendo did indeed produce a keyboard and data recorder package along with its own dialect of BASIC in 1984, allowing users to tinker with its own game creations within some fairly restrictive parameters and though it hardly turned the console into a fully-fledged home computer, it did show Nintendo was prepared to experiment with new ideas.

This is perhaps best illustrated when it came to designing the controllers for the console. We have brought along a NES pad, and we hand Uemura the grey rectangle with its distinctive D-pad and bright red buttons, asking if he was responsible for designing this iconic piece of hardware. "It was the most difficult choice I had to make," he says, cradling the controller like a beloved child. "I had designed arcade games [in the past] and they used joysticks. The engineers I was working with on the Famicom said, 'We have to use a joystick!' But there was one guy who had gone over to work on the Game & Watch [team]. He came back to our project and he brought the control unit created for the multi-screen *Donkey Kong* Game & Watch to our division. He took out the screen and connected the electronics to the Famicom and we played!"

Previous entries in the Game & Watch series had only needed buttons for left and right but *Donkey Kong* required upward movement so Mario, or Jumpman as he was known back then, could rescue his love interest. A joystick clearly wouldn't work with a folding dual-screen handheld, so the revolutionary D-pad was created and Uemura realised this would be ideal for his new console. "Naturally, we could have used a joystick but we were thinking of [the Famicom] as a toy and toys you put on the floor. Children might step on a joystick and it could hurt their feet… and break the controller! Also, when we played, *Donkey Kong* Game & Watch we found we were only looking at the top screen. With a TV screen, you only look at that, not the controller. You need that sense, just using your fingers."

Of course, it proved to be an excellent design decision and the ergonomically-sound D-pad would become the industry standard for decades to come, even today, all of the current-generation consoles use it in one way or another. Not all the innovations of the Famicom controller were to be as influential, though, at least not in the short term. Uemura took the unusual step of including a microphone in the second controller, partly inspired by Japan's enduring love affair with karaoke. Was he really considering *Singstar*-style games at the start of the Eighties, we ask?

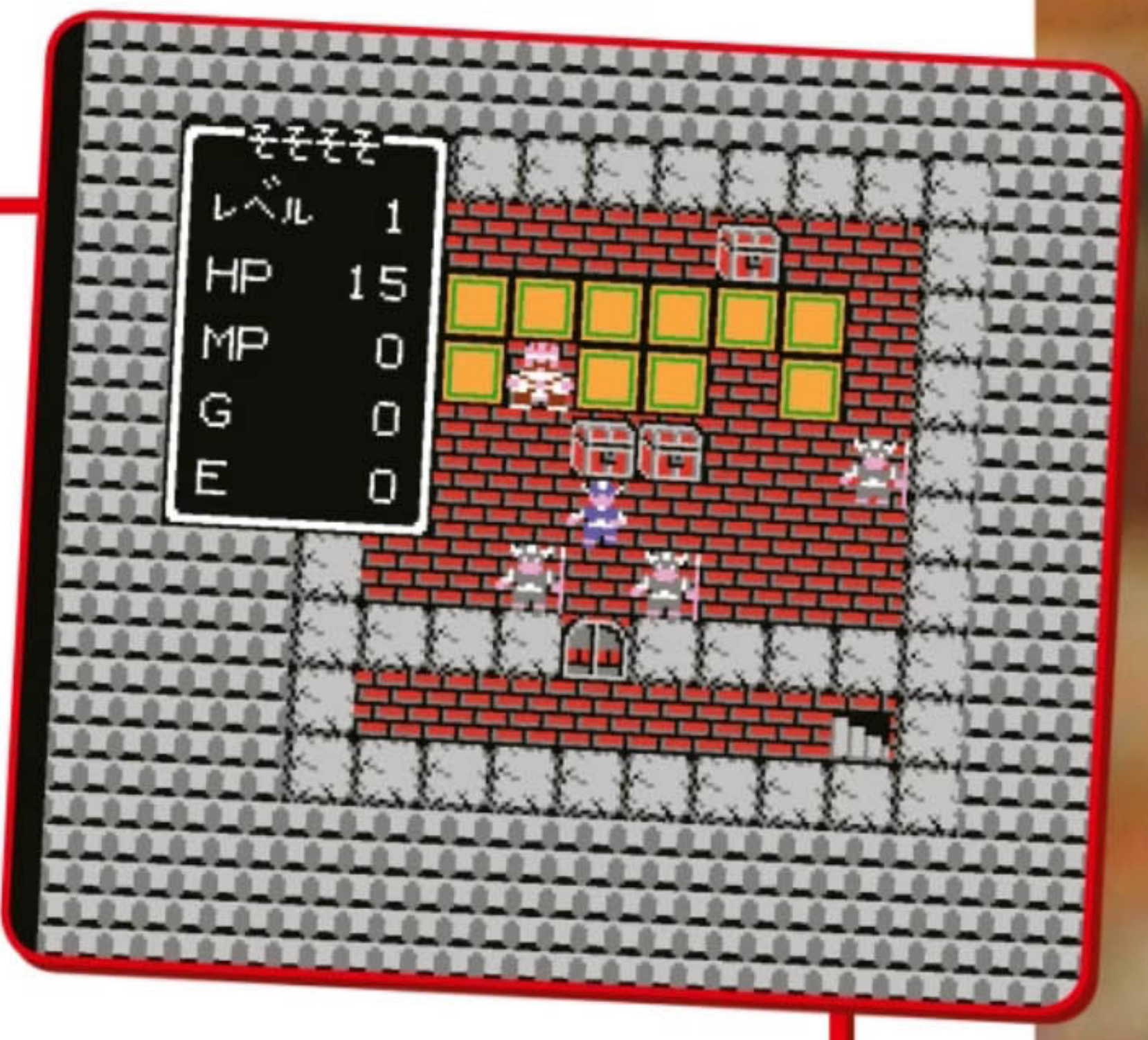
"I was thinking about it," he nods, with a twinkle in his eye. "I was also thinking about using the voice to play the role of the controller in games. I made sure the voice coming in from the microphone could be responded to by the CPU but only a few titles came out that made use of that function."

Clearly, it was an idea ahead of its time. With the Famicom project nearing completion and the core hardware taking shape nicely, there were still some cosmetic decisions to be made. It was decided that the cartridges themselves should be the same size as audio cassettes, allowing Japanese consumers to use pre-existing household furniture and containers to store their burgeoning game collection, and then there was the colour of the machine itself.

"We discussed the colour of the console a lot," remembers Uemura. "Should we make it look like a toy or more like serious hardware? In the end, President Yamauchi's favourite colour was red and so we used the same shade as his muffler."

If you're now worrying about Yamauchi's health – specifically his nose – we can assure you that we clarified exactly what Uemura meant by 'muffler' and were relieved to find he was referring to the President's scarf. Thus the aesthetically-pleasing strawberries-and-cream colour scheme of the Famicom was agreed on… except the console wasn't called that yet. The machine was not given its name until shortly before its release and Uemura explains his very personal connection with the naming process with obvious pride.

"I always talked about work stuff with my fe. She was always willing to listen. I told her the name [of the console] had not been decided and it was taking a long time to come up with a good name. There were already 'personal computers' in Japan and we were discussing that [our console]



BATTLETOADS

■ Though Japanese and American developers dominated the NES release schedules, the console did at least have one notable British success story. Tim and Chris Stamper established their reputation for excellence on the ZX Spectrum as Ultimate but having changed its name to Rare, began a long and fruitful relationship with Nintendo.

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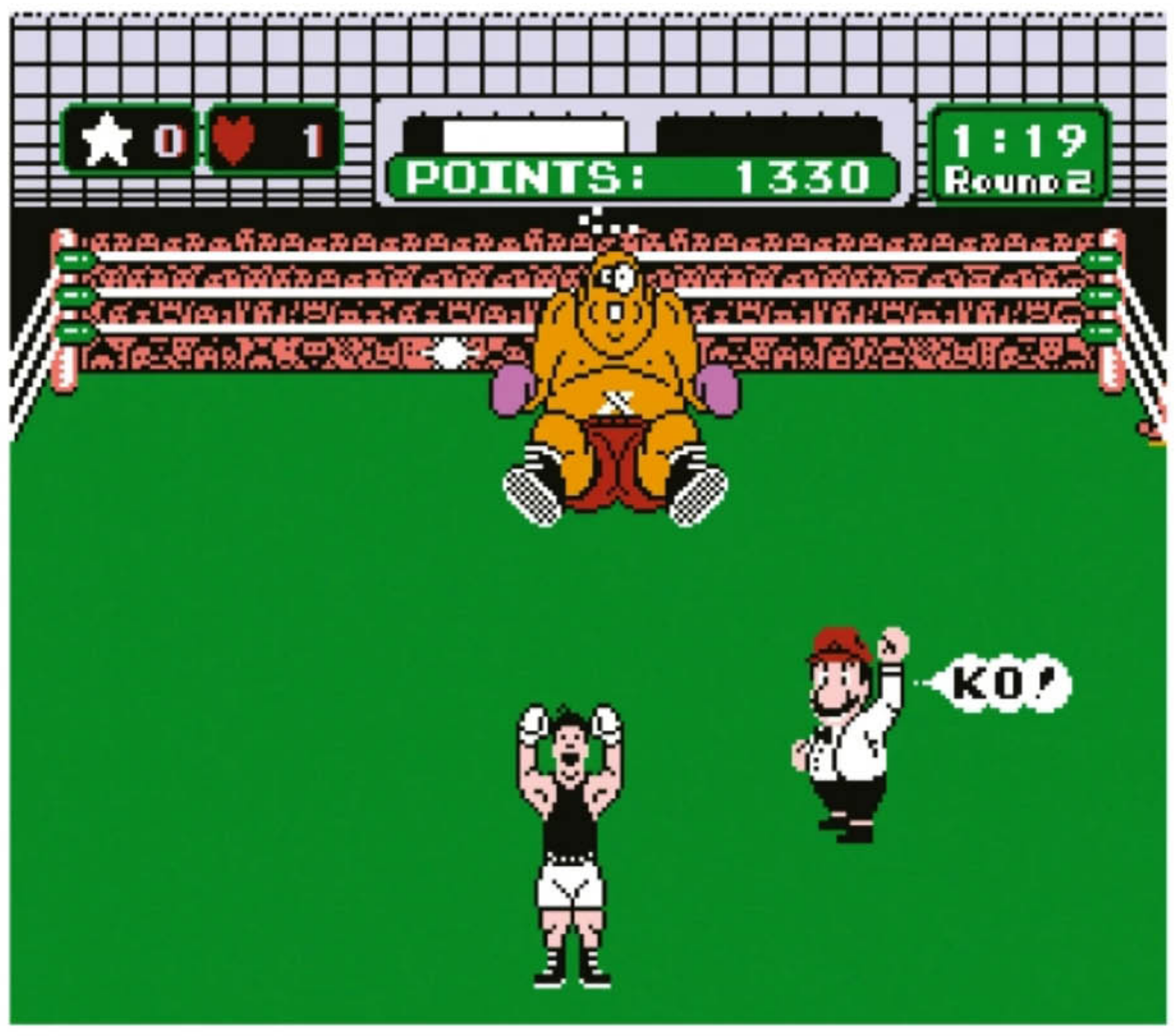
DRAGON QUEST

■ A long-running series from Enix that started out on the NES, *Dragon Quest* (or *Dragon Warrior* as early titles were known in the West) helped popularise RPGs and establish mainstays of the genre, from turn-based combat and random encounters to controlling a party of adventurers as they battle to save the day.



» [NES] *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!* was superb, being a slick adaptation of Nintendo's popular arcade game.

was not 'personal', it was right there for everyone, so it had to be 'family', didn't it! My wife said, 'Okay, but it has to be Famicom. You have to make it shorter!' I took that idea straight to the company, that it should be 'Famicom'. President Yaumauchi said, 'What the heck is that?!' He really didn't like it. I explained this wasn't just a 'personal computer', it was for all the family and that we Japanese tend to shorten everything and I thought it was a good name. He said, 'No, it's not a good idea to shorten [the words] at the beginning. If people want to start calling it that later, that's okay, but at the start, we needed to call it 'Family Computer.'' So that's how the name came about!"

Nintendo's Family Computer was launched in Japan in 1983 and, according to Uemura, it sold 400,000 consoles that year, a respectable number though he is quick to point out that to be considered a 'hit' you needed to shift a million units. Moreover, defects in some of the graphic chips created by Ricoh and problems with the joypads soon became apparent. The Famicom had its controllers hard-wired to the console, which was a cheaper option than providing a joypad connector but proved costly in the long run. Nintendo hadn't anticipated passionate gamers mashing and yanking their controllers so aggressively in the heat of play and a damaged joypad meant the whole

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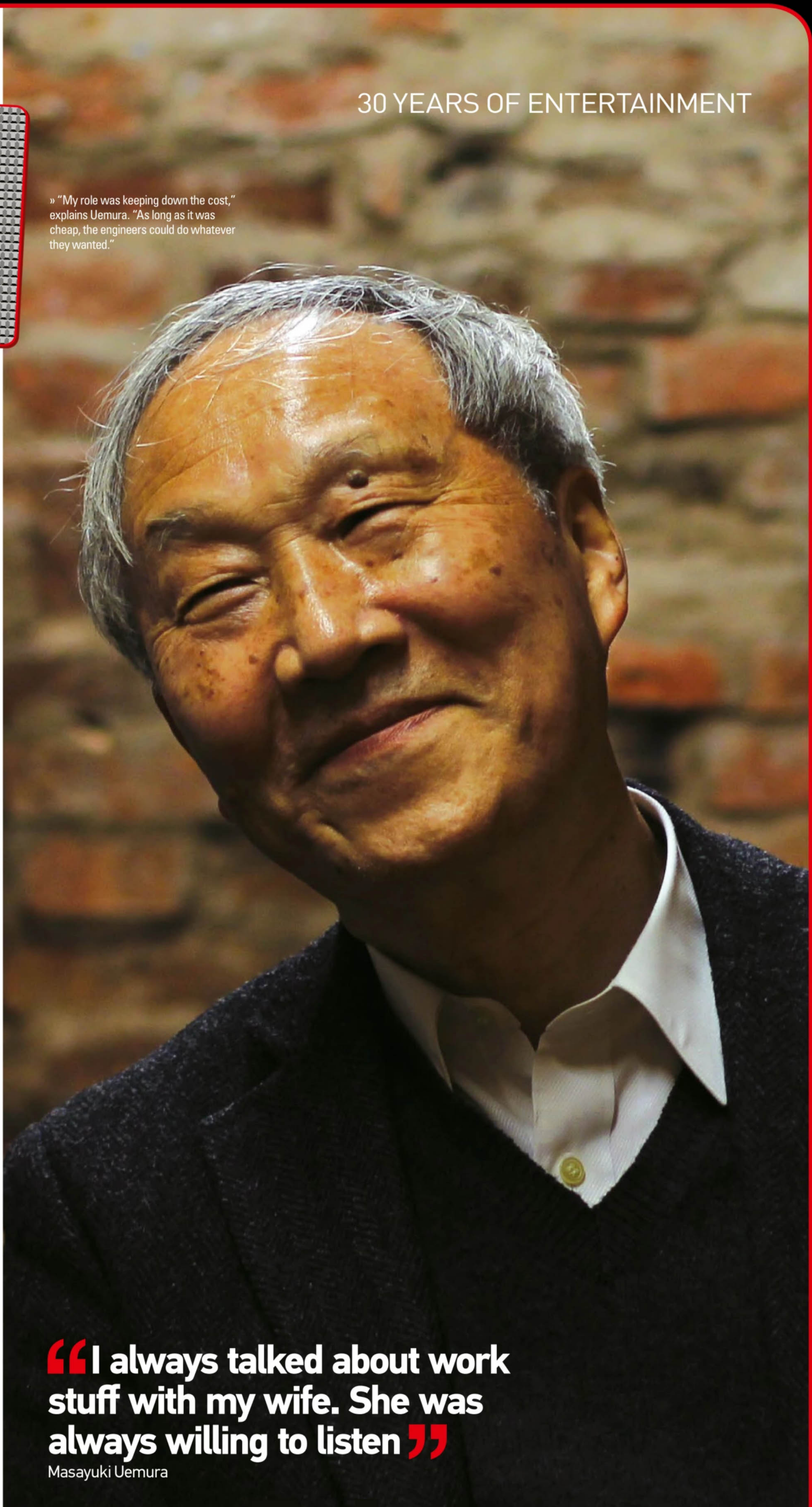
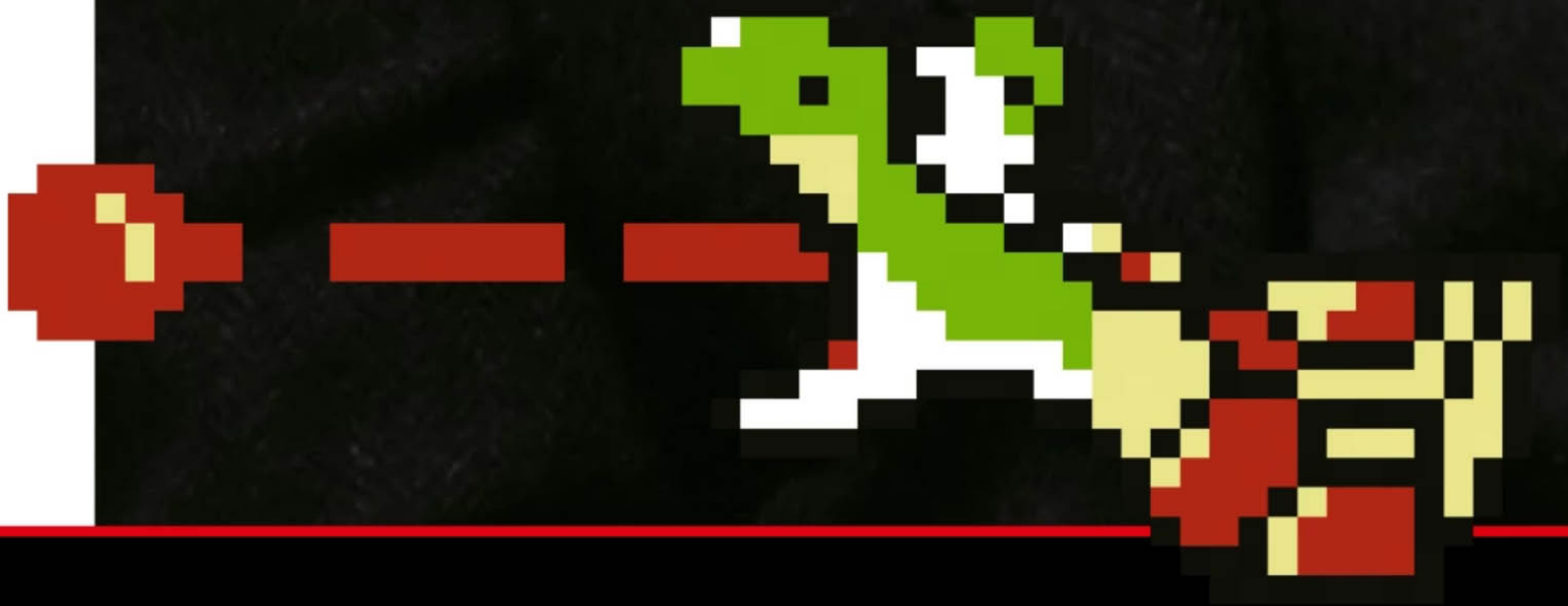
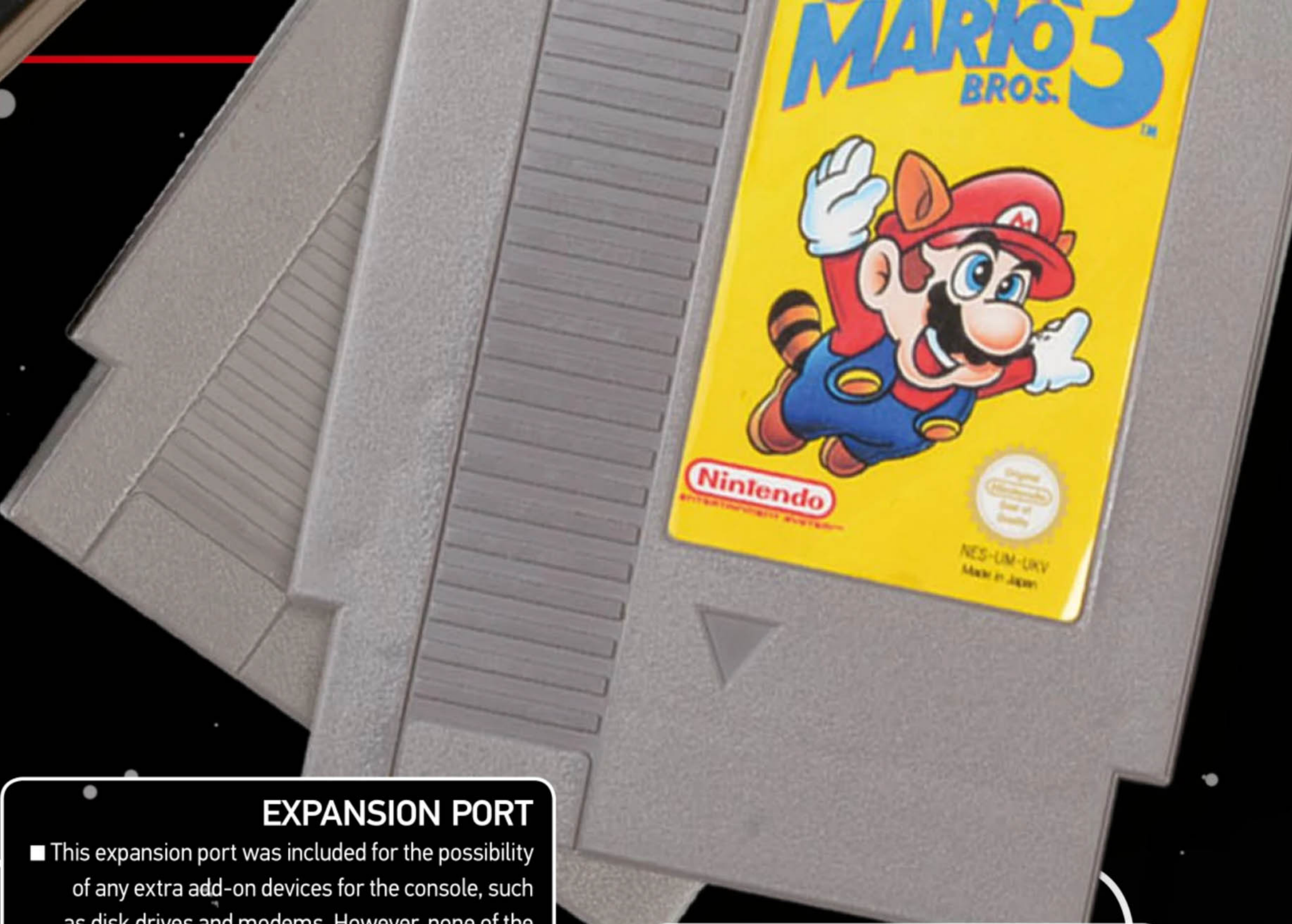


» "My role was keeping down the cost," explains Uemura. "As long as it was cheap, the engineers could do whatever they wanted."

"I always talked about work stuff with my wife. She was always willing to listen"

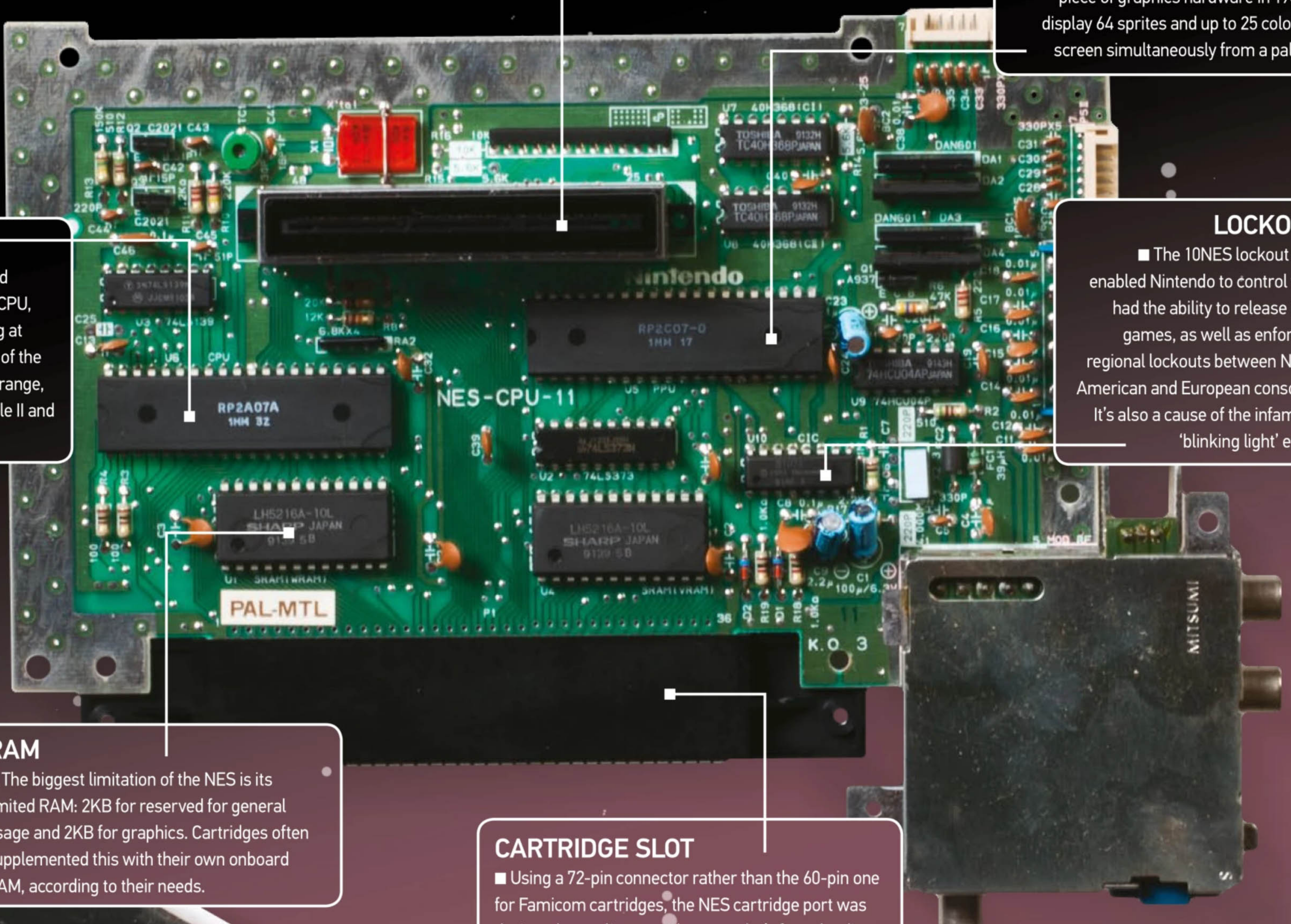
Masayuki Uemura





UNDER THE HOOD

Here's a look at the key components of the NES



EXPANSION PORT

■ This expansion port was included for the possibility of any extra add-on devices for the console, such as disk drives and modems. However, none of the projects using the expansion port ever saw the light of day, so it's a vestigial connector.

PPU

■ The Picture Processing Unit was custom-built for the NES, again by Ricoh. It was a very capable piece of graphics hardware in 1983, able to display 64 sprites and up to 25 colours on the screen simultaneously from a palette of 54.

CPU

■ The Ricoh 2A03, a modified version of the popular 6502 CPU, is an 8-bit processor running at 1.79MHz. It's a close relative of the CPUs used in the Atari 8-bit range, the Commodore 64, the Apple II and the BBC Micro.

LOCKOUT

■ The 10NES lockout chip enabled Nintendo to control who had the ability to release NES games, as well as enforcing regional lockouts between North American and European consoles. It's also a cause of the infamous 'blinking light' error.

RAM

■ The biggest limitation of the NES is its limited RAM: 2KB for reserved for general usage and 2KB for graphics. Cartridges often supplemented this with their own onboard RAM, according to their needs.

CARTRIDGE SLOT

■ Using a 72-pin connector rather than the 60-pin one for Famicom cartridges, the NES cartridge port was designed to replicate a video recorder's front-loading mechanism. However, the pins can easily become bent and dirty, leading to errors.

Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
NES VERSION

console was unusable. "The main thing I remember from that time is the defective consoles being returned," sighs Uemura, who estimates a staggering 100,000 faulty Famicoms came back during that first year. "All these problems we had to overcome! The whole company had to get involved to resolve them. Yes, I felt pressure but it was exciting because everyone was helping us out."

The company rallied round its new venture, partly, suggests Uemura, due to increased competition in the handheld market previously dominated by Game & Watch, and by the end of 1983, its stocks of the Famicom had sold out. "I thought that was the end of it," he shrugs. "Personally, I was pessimistic but then in February 1984, distributors started asking me when we were making more! Kids were asking for it. There is a custom in Japan for grandparents to give money to children and this is what they wanted to spend it on!"

Though Uemura maintains the initial launch of the Famicom in his home nation was generally viewed as 'a failure', there was still talk of the company learning from its mistakes and revamping the console for the US market. Nintendo did, at least, have some indication that its videogames were valued across the Pacific. The Nintendo Vs. System was doing well in American arcades and Uemura recalls seeing the February 1985 edition of trade magazine *PlayMeter* showing Nintendo titles such as *Vs. Tennis* and *Vs. Pinball* dominating the charts. Nintendo were still producing games that people wanted to play but the negative image of home consoles which had followed the spectacular downfall of Atari and other key industry players was a significant barrier to overcome.

"We thought by changing the exterior of our console, we could make ourselves seem different," explains Uemura. "The front-loading system for the NES was designed to make it look like a video recorder [not a games console]. Also, the US is a dry country so we wanted to shield the cartridges… we didn't want children getting [an electric] shock!"

X17
B
A
-LIFE-
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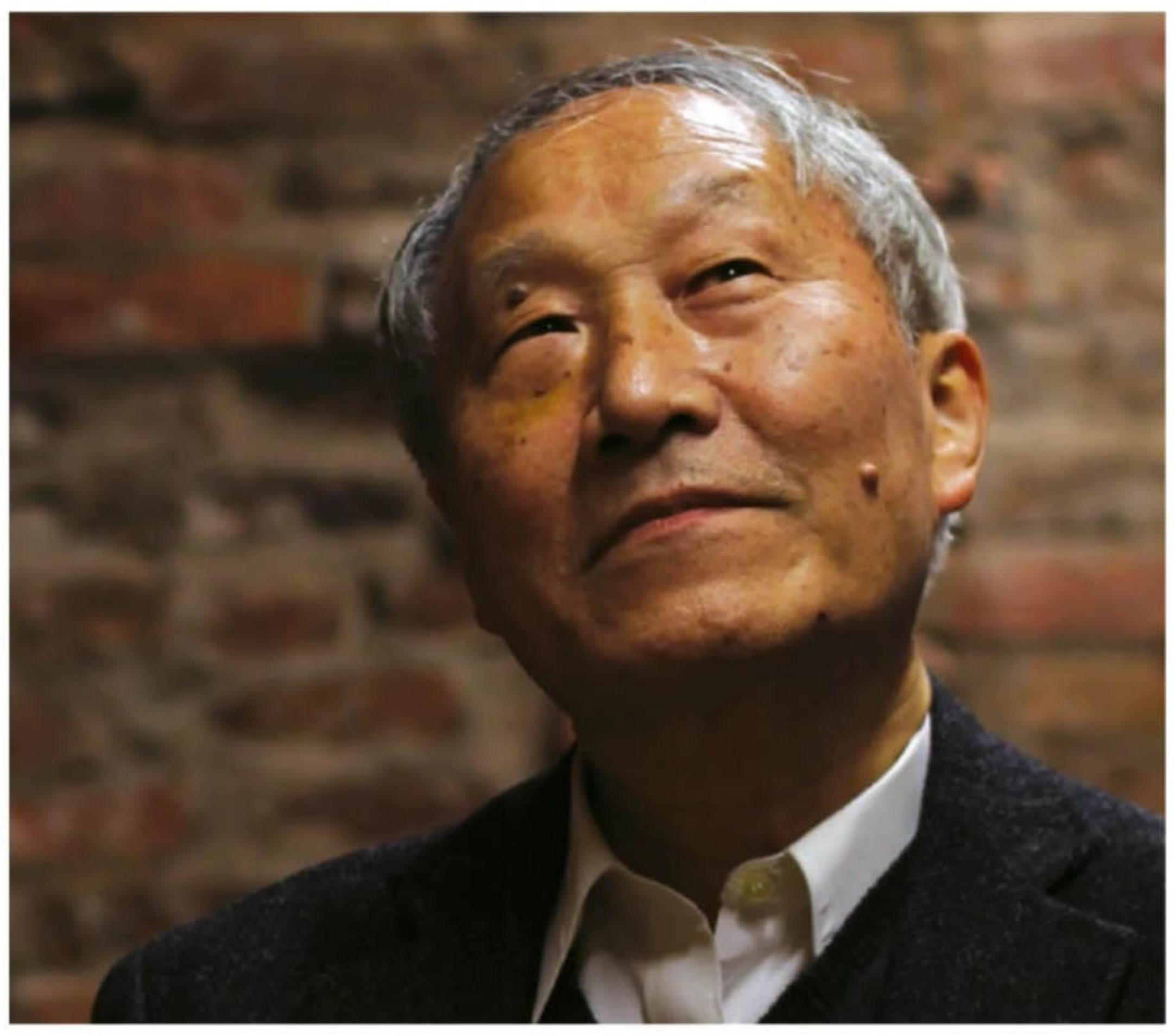
X0

» [NES] Like several high-profile releases, *The Legend Of Zelda* started off life on the Famicom Disk System.



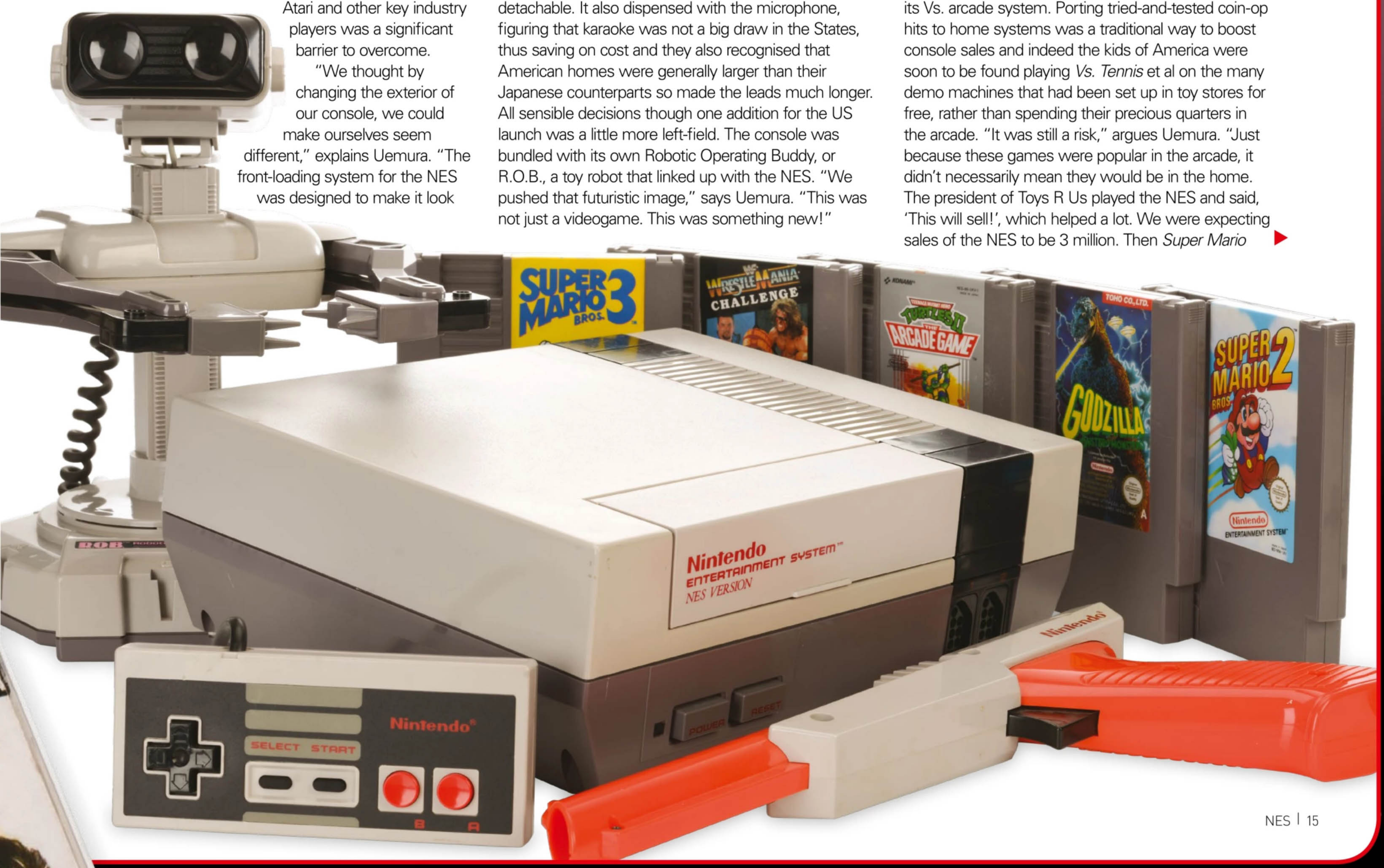
» "We didn't want the sound to be too annoying in the house, even if it was played repeatedly," says Uemura of the Famicom's audio.

There were other, more physical, concerns that influenced the redesign of the Famicom for the American market. "The hands of American children are bigger than Japanese children. We were worried they might find it hard to use the controller. Also, they didn't have D-pads but we thought this might make our console stand out from those that used joysticks."

After the problems with the controllers in Japan, Nintendo decided to make the NES controllers detachable. It also dispensed with the microphone, figuring that karaoke was not a big draw in the States, thus saving on cost and they also recognised that American homes were generally larger than their Japanese counterparts so made the leads much longer. All sensible decisions though one addition for the US launch was a little more left-field. The console was bundled with its own Robotic Operating Buddy, or R.O.B., a toy robot that linked up with the NES. "We pushed that futuristic image," says Uemura. "This was not just a videogame. This was something new!"

The team also emphasised the primary 'entertainment' function of the machine by renaming it the Nintendo Entertainment System, a title which was only decided a month before the console's launch in the United States. Besides, the 'Family Computer' tagline had been used by rival manufacturer Mattel in its advertising for its Adam computer. Nintendo also included the NES Zapper in the package, after extensive market research had returned a not altogether unexpected finding. "Americans like guns", says Uemura, with a wry smile.

The NES launched in the United States in 1985 along with 17 games, predominantly titles taken from its Vs. arcade system. Porting tried-and-tested coin-op hits to home systems was a traditional way to boost console sales and indeed the kids of America were soon to be found playing *Vs. Tennis* et al on the many demo machines that had been set up in toy stores for free, rather than spending their precious quarters in the arcade. "It was still a risk," argues Uemura. "Just because these games were popular in the arcade, it didn't necessarily mean they would be in the home. The president of Toys R Us played the NES and said, 'This will sell!', which helped a lot. We were expecting sales of the NES to be 3 million. Then *Super Mario*



MORE FROM UEMURA

COLOUR TV GAME SYSTEM

■ Nintendo took its first tentative steps as a console manufacturer in 1977 with the Color TV-Game 6. Featuring half a dozen versions of *Pong*, it was shortly followed by TV-Game 15, which served up more bat-and-ball games and added wired controllers, making it considerably more user-friendly. If you have a white version of the original unit, you have a real rarity as, apparently, only a few hundred were ever produced.

DISK SYSTEM

■ This Japanese-only peripheral allowed a disk drive to be attached to the Famicom console via the cartridge port and used bespoke floppy disks called 'Disk Cards' which could store 112K, which was a considerable size on its release in 1986. "Based on results, the disk system wasn't a good idea," acknowledges Uemura, "but from a developers [point of] view, it was rewritable and it did reduce costs." A release in the West was mooted but never materialised.

ZAPPER (BELOW)

■ Originally resembling a revolver when released in Japan to tie-in with the cowboy-themed *Wild Gunman* game, this lightgun was remodelled for the North American market, adopting a futuristic blaster look. Initially produced in NES grey, a version came in fluorescent orange, presumably to distance itself even further from an actual firearm. Many pixelated birds succumbed to its firepower when *Duck Hunt* was bundled with the console.

SUPER FAMICOM

■ What Uemura did next. He was lead designer again on what would become one of the most beloved consoles of all time and home to some of the best games ever made. Uemura politely declined to answer any questions about his follow-up to the NES during our interview, though alluded to many intriguing tales concerning its creation. Perhaps when the SNES also reaches 30 we'll get to hear them.

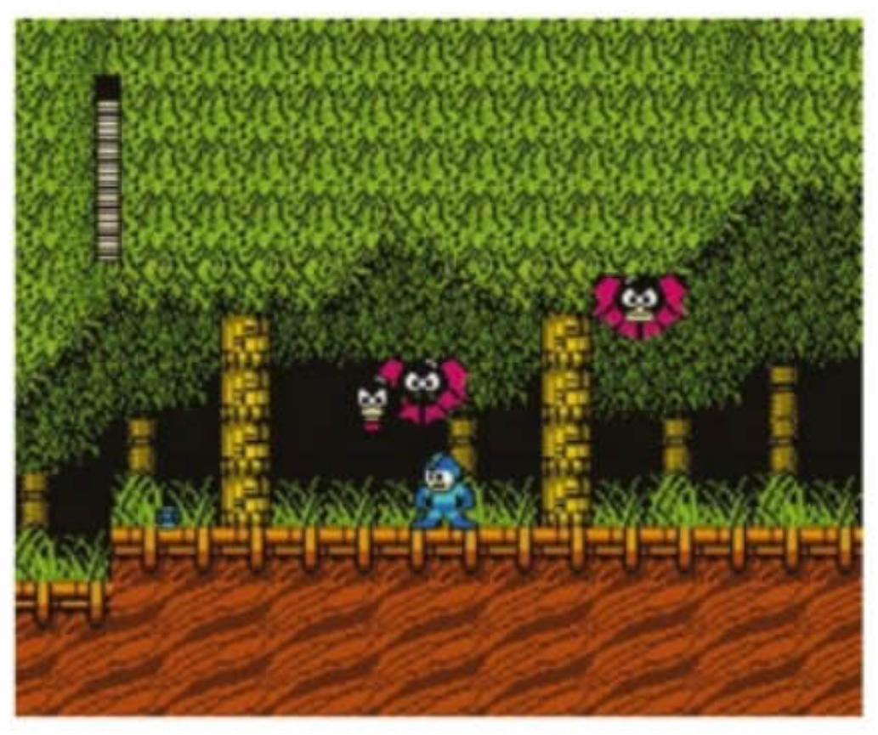
©1985 Nintendo® Zapper™
SYSTEM™
POWER
RESET
SELECT

» "I would like to have added larger sprites," says Uemura when asked if he'd have done anything different with his console. "Characters were only 8x8 pixels."

> "Kids were calling our HQ in Seattle if they were stuck in a game or asking about secrets"
> Masayuki Uemura

TO THE MAX

The games and chips that expanded the NES' capabilities



MEGA MAN 2

CHIP: **MMC1**

■ The first of Nintendo's custom memory management controller chips was used to switch between banks of program and character ROM, and it added support for important things like game saving and multi-directional scrolling. As a result, many games used it – literally hundreds of them, from both Nintendo and its third parties.

SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

CHIP: **MMC3**

■ The most popular of Nintendo's add-on chips was used in many NES games, and provided additional RAM, a pair of selectable 8KB program ROM banks, two 2KB character ROM banks and four 1KB character ROM banks. A scanline-based IRQ counter is also included to improve split-screen scrolling.

COBRA TRIANGLE

CHIP: **AOROM**

■ Chris Stamper's memory management controller is relatively simple, offering a 32KB ROM bankswitch and character RAM, but it has an odd quirk in that it uses one-screen mirroring, meaning that only one nametable is used for all four quadrants of the screen. As you might expect, it was used in games developed by Rare.

AKUMAJOU DENSETSU

CHIP: **VRC6**

■ As well as offering bank-switching for both program and character ROM and a CPU cycle-based IRQ counter, this advanced chip added three additional sound channels. In the US and Europe, *Castlevania III* used Nintendo's MMC5 chip instead, as the NES can't utilise extra sound channels like the Famicom.

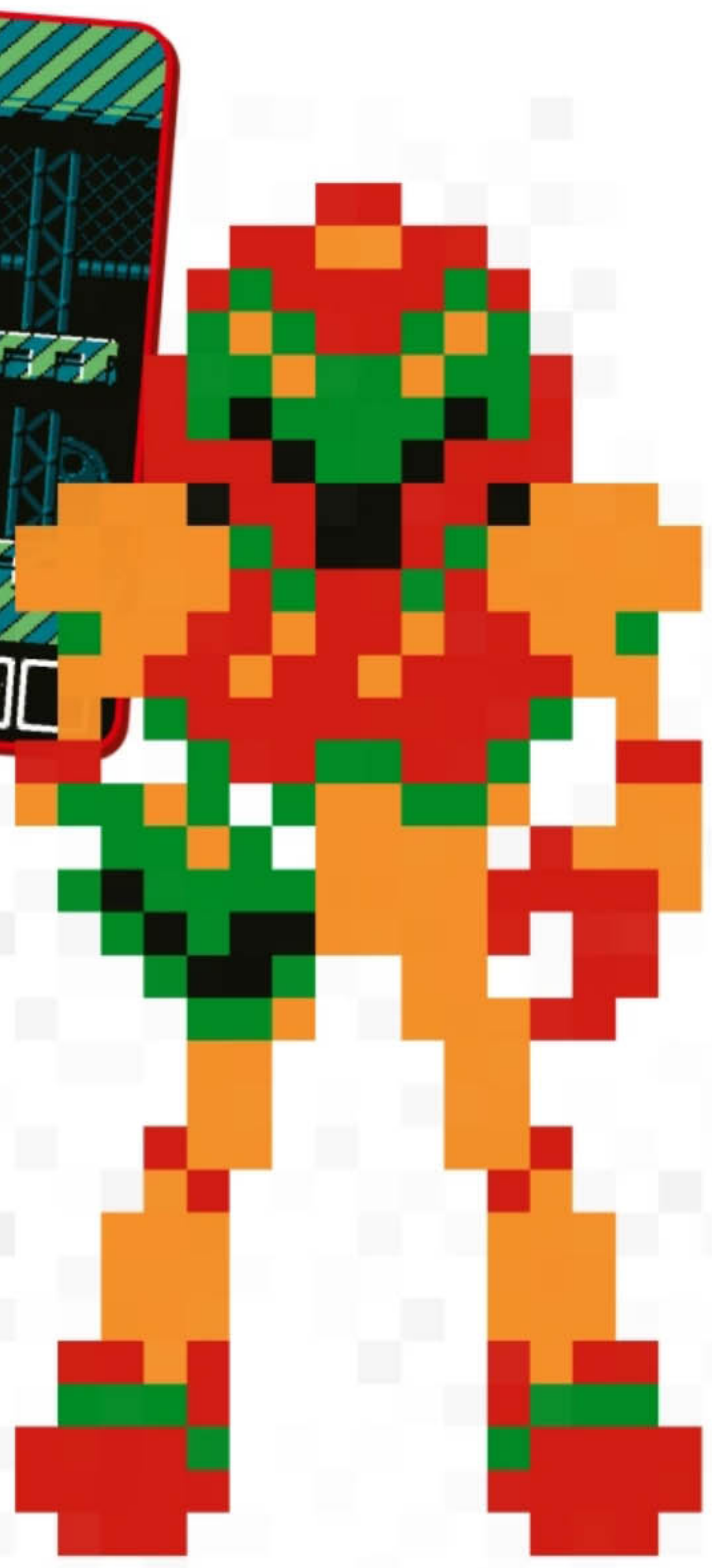
SCORE-001700 TIME 0312 BLK 1-02
PLAYER
ENEMY
P-02

SCORE 00000960
REST 02

GIMMICK!

CHIP: **SUNSOFT 5B**

■ Sunsoft's FME-7 controller allowed for program ROM to be switched in 8KB banks and character ROM in 1KB banks, and contained a CPU cycle-based IRQ. However, the upgraded Sunsoft 5B version used in *Gimmick!* also included a version of the Yamaha YM2149, adding extra sound channels that set the game apart from its peers.



» [NES] *Metroid* was one of several NES games that featured a Password Pak, after starting off life on the Disk System.

Bros. came out about the same time as it entered America. The rest is history."

New hardware needs a 'killer app', a piece of software that captures the public imagination and makes consumers snap up a machine. *Super Mario Bros.* must rank as one of the best examples of this, becoming the biggest-selling title in videogaming history at the time and igniting America's love affair with all things Mario. There was a real buzz about this new console from the East and Uemura remembers tales of phones ringing off the hook at Nintendo Of America. "Kids were calling our HQ in Seattle if they were stuck in a game or asking about secrets. Our employees couldn't work effectively! We had letters from parents, too. I remember getting some that were really unhappy we hadn't included Stage 2 [the pie factory] in the NES version of *Donkey Kong*. We had to say sorry, it wasn't possible, but it made me realise parents were really evaluating the NES."

So despite the initial predictions from experts that Nintendo was foolhardy releasing a console after the so-called videogames crash of the mid-Eighties, the NES ended up dominating the American and Japanese markets for the rest of the decade, ably filling the gap left by Atari's fall from grace. Was timing a key factor in the colossal success of the console, we ask?

» Before the Wii, the NES was Nintendo's most successful system, with over 60 million units sold.

"You understand the meaning of the word 'Nintendo'?", Uemura replies. "Leave luck to heaven," we answer. He looks us right in the eyes and chuckles, "Well, there you are."

As our time with Uemura draws to an end, an orderly queue forms of National Videogame Arcade staff politely asking if he might autograph various bits of NES hardware. We dutifully join the line along with our photographer Matt, who clutches a boxed console in mint condition. Neither of us owned the machine back in the day but, as with so many Europeans, we have come to love it in retrospect. As Uemura gets busy with a magic marker, we ask him how important it was to him that his console was embraced not just in his native Japan but across the globe?

"From a management perspective, of course we want to sell to everybody in the world," he says, after a long pause, "but it's not about that from an engineer's perspective. It's about whether the hardware they produce will be loved and esteemed by everyone. That's what we struggle to do. Personally, I thought it was great hardware but I didn't think it would be accepted [in the way it was]. And remember, the people that made the games did not grow up playing videogames. Creating something in their minds and interacting with it on a TV screen was really exciting for them. That excitement was passed on from the developer to the player at home. Hardware can allow you to go beyond your imagination. Like [James] Watt invented the steam engine and it set other people's imagination free…"

It's a powerful point and Uemura's answer gives us the required confidence to ask him one final question. What role does he think videogames have played in fostering an understanding and collaboration between the nations of East and West? A gentle smile spreads across Uemura's face.

"Childhood is universal," he says. "We are different cultures but we share that universal sense of childhood. To children, it didn't matter if this software was coming from the East or the West. Kids loved Mario and parents loved [the NES] because their kids loved it. Children will be excited by similar things despite cultural diversity. I'm teaching at the university in Kyoto right now and [the word] 'jump' is used in Japan, taken straight from English. Kids, anywhere in the world, want to jump! We could integrate that into videogames. It's about play. The NES also had an important role in transmitting Japanese culture to the world and we received influences from the rest of the world. If America hadn't invented consoles, we wouldn't have the NES!"

The Nintendo Entertainment System as a symbol of peace and understanding may be pushing it slightly but it undoubtedly makes us look at the unassuming grey breeze block in a different light. As we shake hands with Uemura and Aki and say our goodbyes, fellow journalist Gemma asks its creator what the console symbolises to him?

"It's the device that changed my life," he laughs. "It made it go crazy! After all these years, I'm still talking about it, coming here, all over the world."

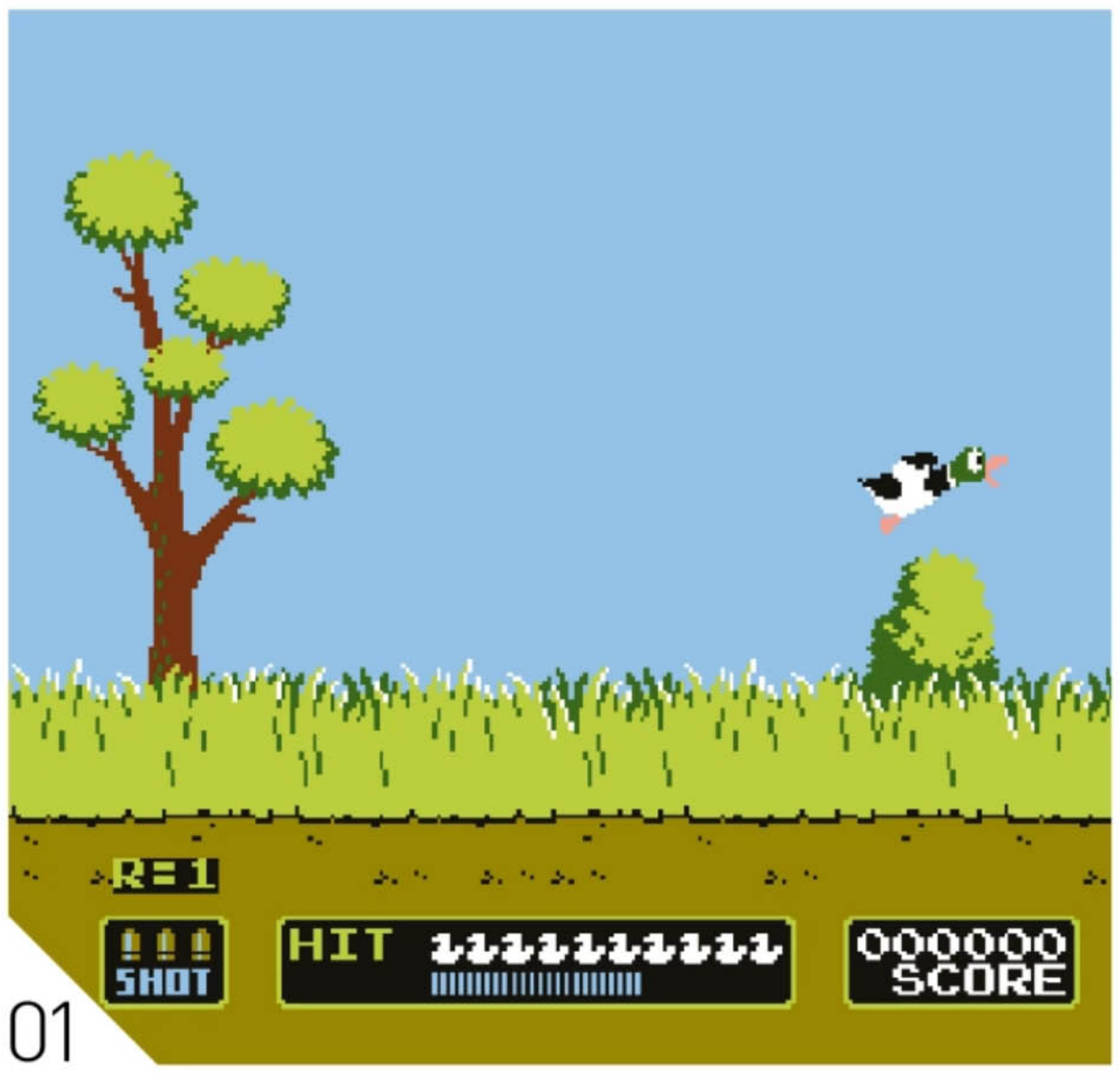
Thirty years from its UK release and the NES is still bringing people together.

Many thanks to the National Videogame Arcade, Uemura's translator, Aki, Gemma at juicygamereviews.com and Matt Taylor at bit.ly/1SVZX3t for the photography.

Nintendo
SELECT START
B A

NES PERFECT TEN GAMES

For owners without the cartridge cleaning kit; here are ten of the best wedges of grey plastic you'll ever blow into



01

DUCK HUNT

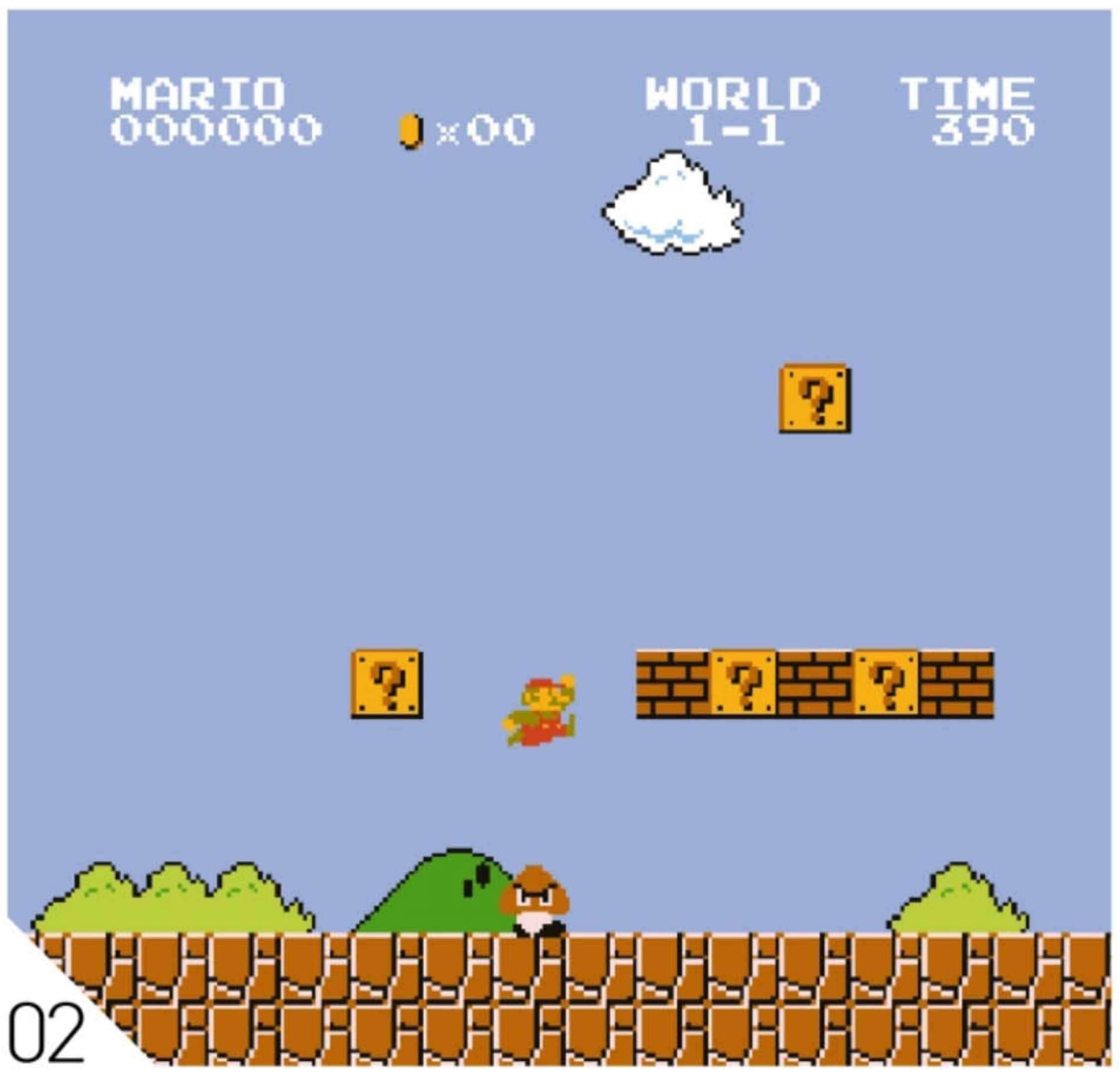
- **RELEASED:** 1984
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *DONKEY KONG*

01 **Billed as the quintessential game for the clunky NES Zapper, Nintendo's repetitive duck-murdering simulator allowed gamers to test their aim with the aid of canine-cohort, Mr Peepers.** It was his job to startle a ball of petrified feathers into the air and yours to sight them in your pistol's crosshair. You had three shots per target and the later levels, which included infinitesimal clay pigeons, called for either a swift dead-aim or the cowardly act of pressing the gun barrel against the television. The game had a neat feature, which allowed duck-welfare enthusiasts to control the direction of the fleeing birds with a second pad and save them from a good buckshot stuffing.

SUPER MARIO BROS

- **RELEASED:** 1985
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *F-ZERO*

02 **It was the block punching, pipe-travelling exploits of two Italian plumbers that finally administered the medicine to the videogame crash' of the Eighties, ridding it of the noxious Martian antibodies of Atari's *ET.*** Shigeru Miyamoto knew how to conjure up golden game icons and the Mario Bros are two of his most prolific. Placing the plumbers into a daring princess/mushroom rescue mission, inside a vivid, smooth-scrolling fantasy world, the game pioneered concepts such as level warping and head stomping. *Super Mario Bros* encapsulates everything that makes a game timeless: catchy theme, fluid gameplay, iconic characters and a hot princess.



02

RIVER CITY RANSOM

- **RELEASED:** 1985
- **PUBLISHED BY:** TECHNOS
- **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *DOUBLE DRAGON*

03 **Punch-bags meet sick-bags when Alex and Ryan receive a note from evil crime-lord Slick informing them their city is being held to ransom and Ryan's girlfriend has been abducted.** Welcome to *River City*, a place of tongue-in-cheek humour, cartoon violence and hard-up vomiting freshmen. Using anything they can lay their fists on, our protagonists set about the streets fighting through Slick's army of students. Their strategy: force them to 'barf' and pocket their loose change. *River City*'s unique fusion of a scrolling beat-'em-up and a subtle RPG make it a superlative NES classic.

MEGA MAN 2

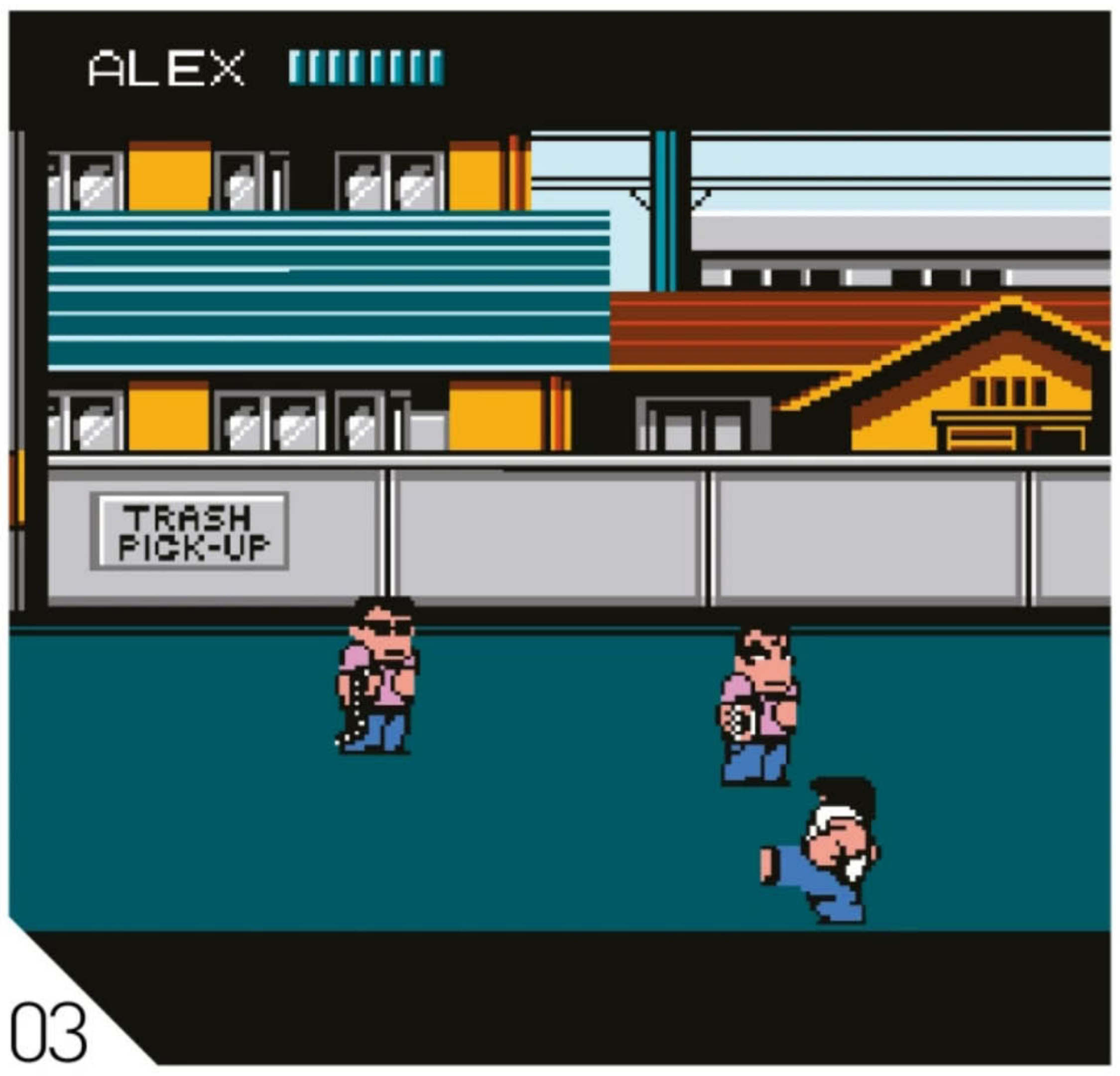
- **RELEASED:** 1998
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- **CREATED BY:** CAPCOM
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *DEVIL MAY CRY*

04 **Don't let *Mega Man*'s mountainous energy bar fool you, trying to finish *Mega Man 2* is like trying to stay alive without any kidneys.** This is an unforgiving platform blaster where each level demands pinpoint precision and patience. The order in which you blast through Dr Wily's levels is up to you, but don't think you can use the easier stages to stockpile lives. Each level houses a bionic-boss whose special power can be acquired. These abilities give Mega Man an advantage over another boss, so choosing your route through the game was how you maintained a healthy blood pressure.

PUNCH-OUT!!

- **RELEASED:** 1986
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *LYLAT WARS*

05 **Nintendo's port of its popular Eighties arcade puncher was somewhat lost in translation when it appeared in its 8-bit glory.** The arcade's transparent fighter was omitted and in his corner stood a pale, pint-sized pugilist on a mission to topple heavyweight hard-man, Mike Tyson. It quickly collected acclaim for its accessibility and colourful roster of cartoon boxers who were forced to sop up each blow of the games trademark playability. The NES homes the finest version of *Punch-Out!!*, still managing to pack more punch than its technically enhanced SNES sequel and arcade counterpart.



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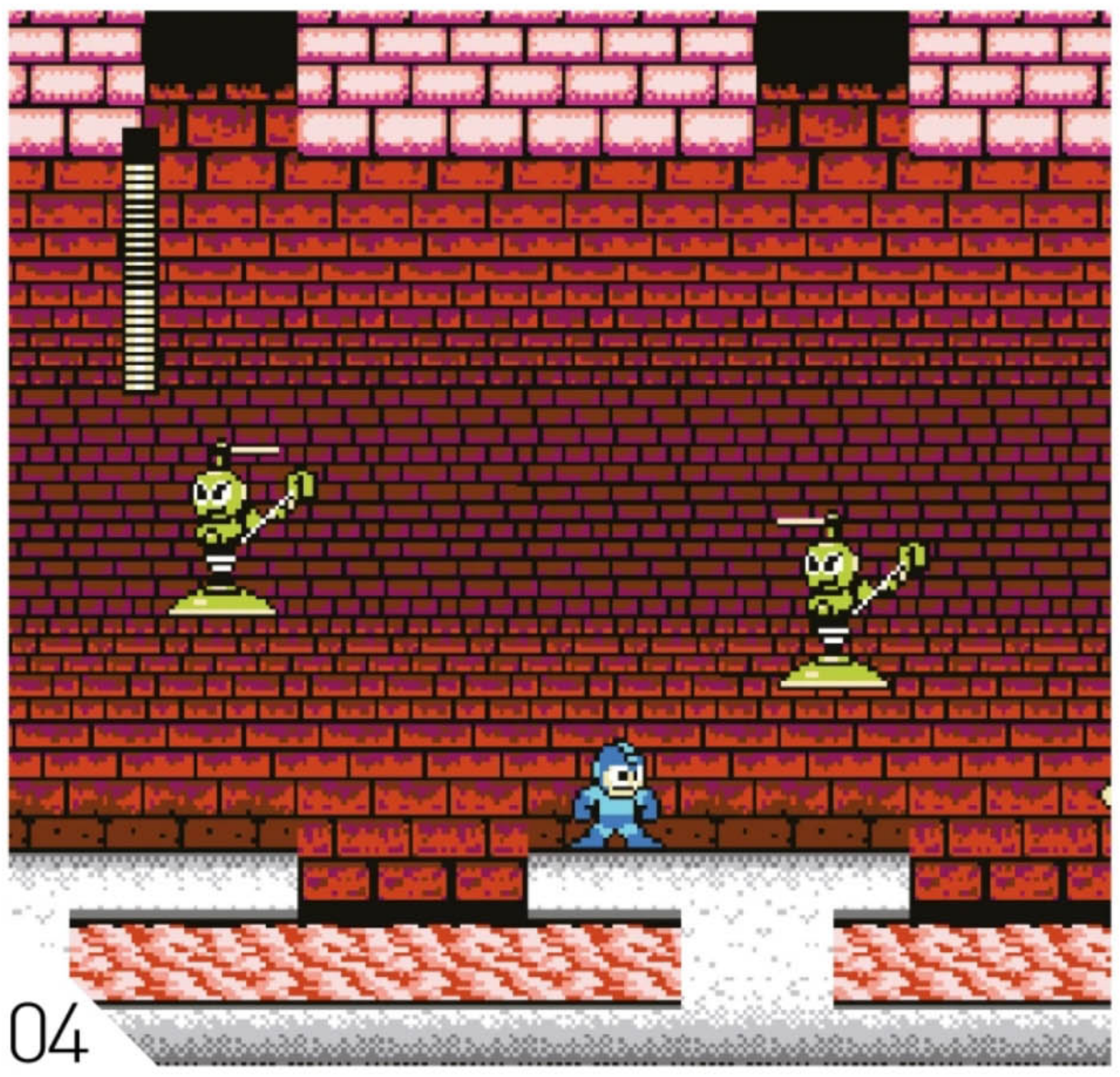

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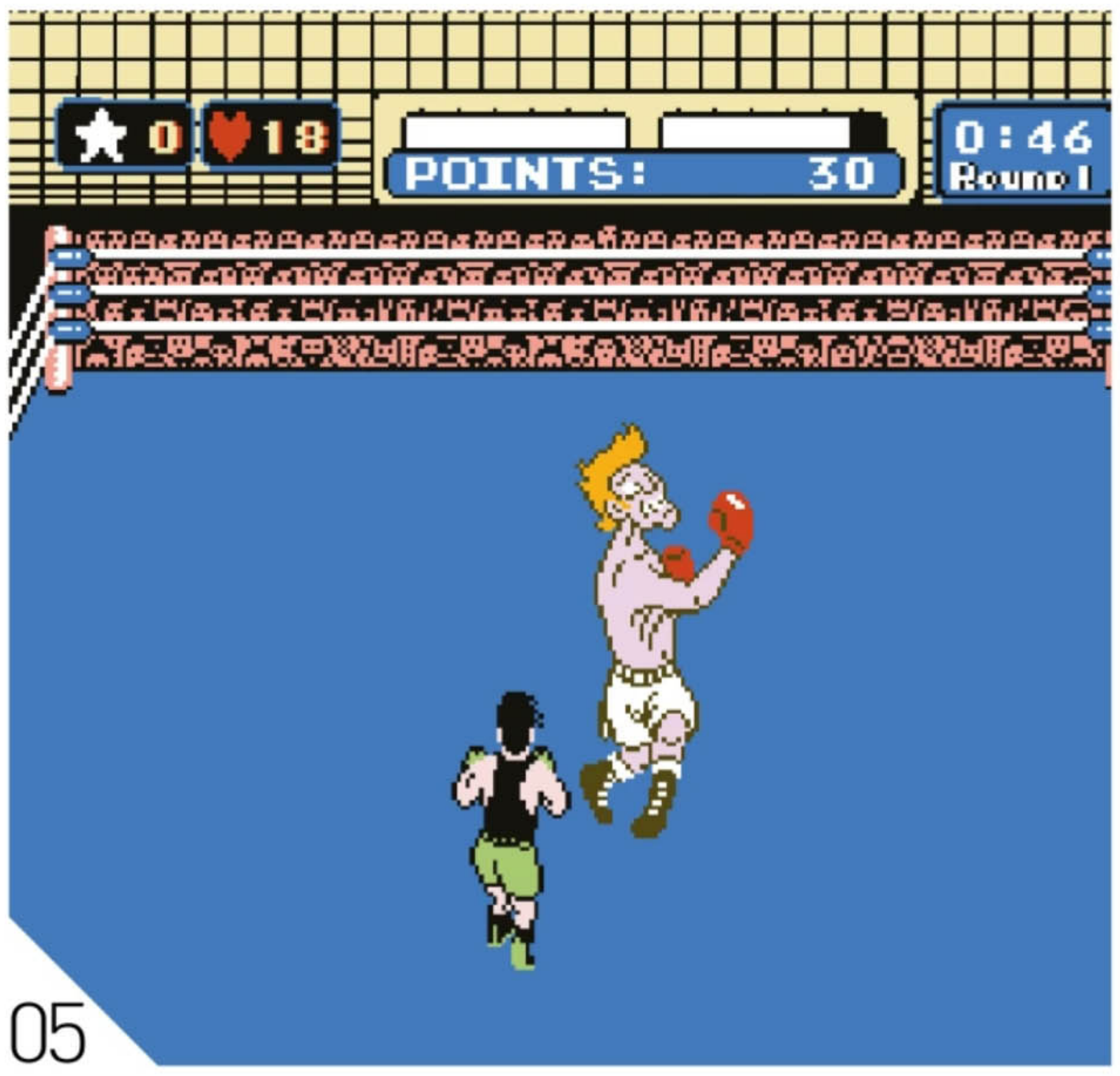
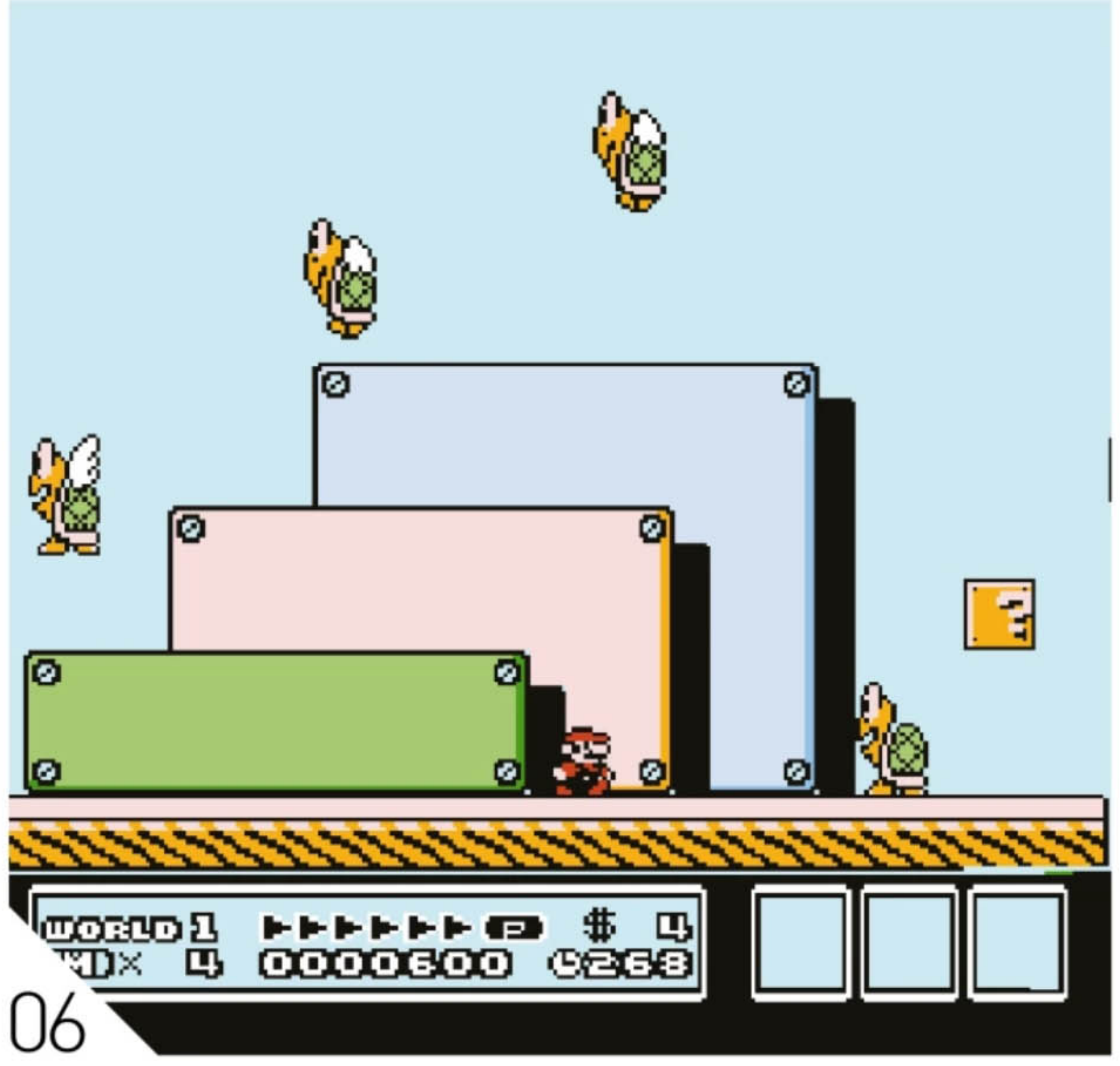


05

Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
NES VERSION
POWER
RESET
1
2



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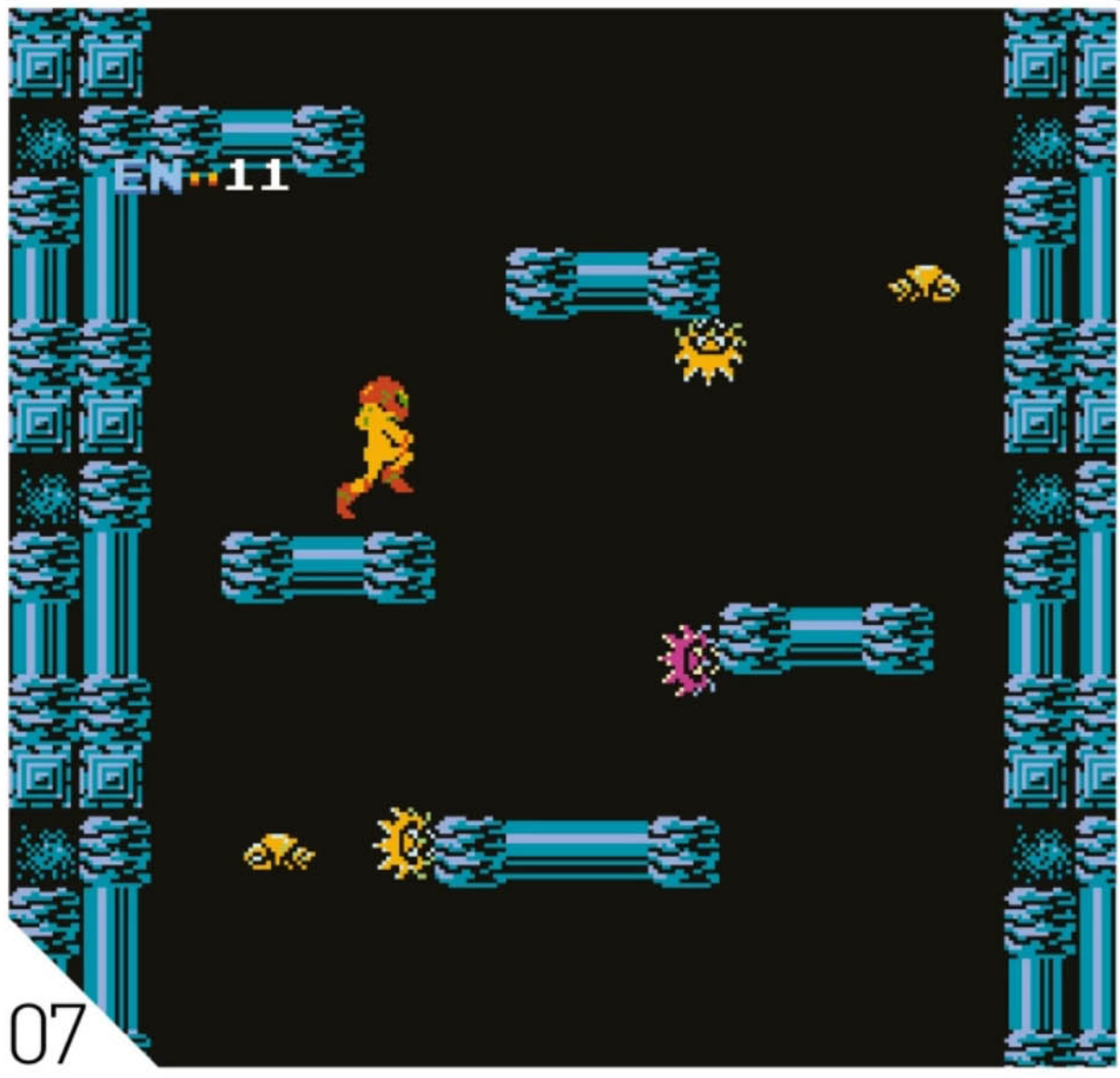

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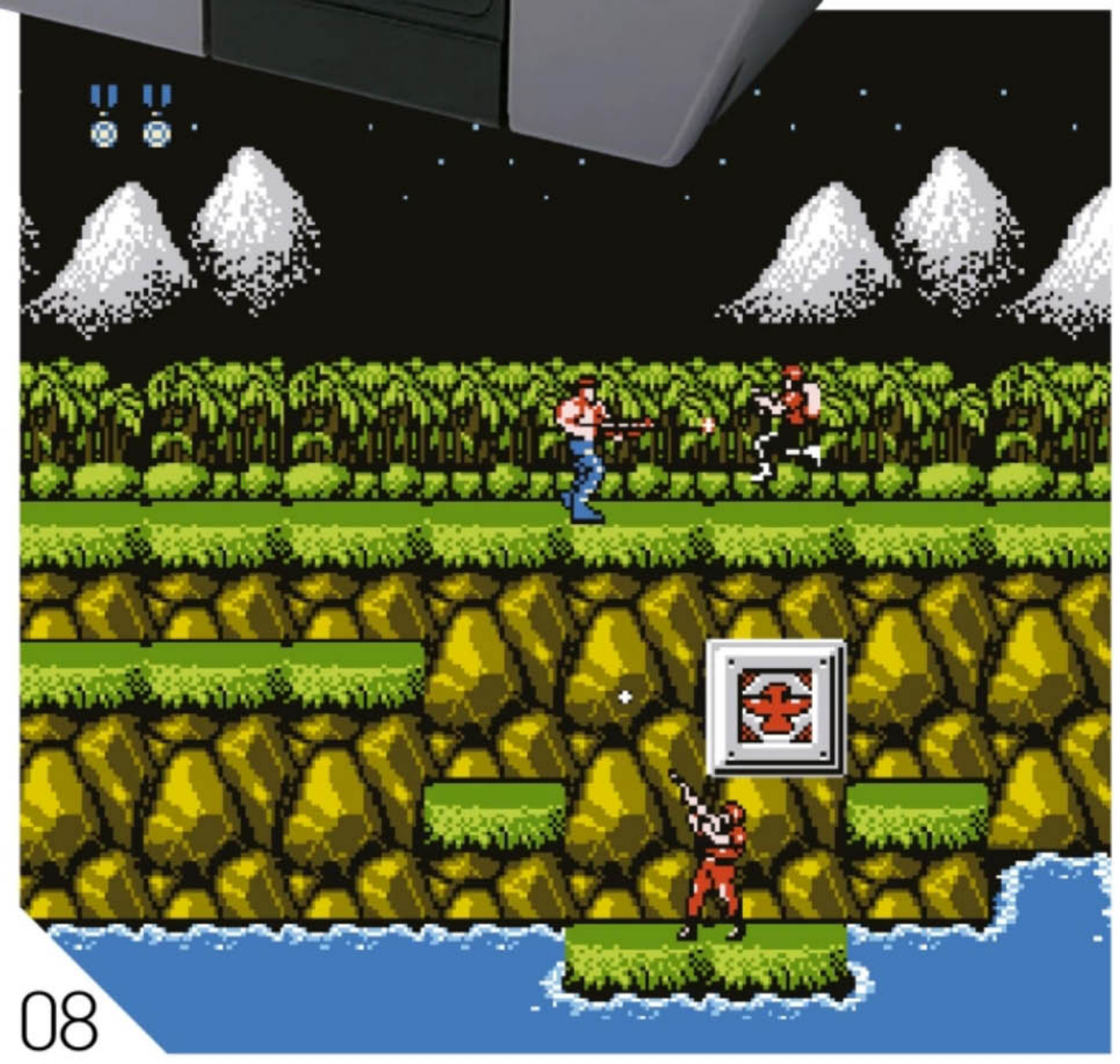


08

SUPER MARIO BROS 3

- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *PILOT WINGS*

06 **Mario's goodbye gift to the NES is a marvel. It encapsulated all the qualities of the first game while introducing new elements now seen as essential to the series as Mario's flat cap and black moustache.** *Super Mario Bros 3* incorporated sub-bosses, multiple routes and mini-games, while embracing the notions of secrets and level warping. In fact, the game's so great, millions of Americans stood in unity to create a large image of his head using colourful T-shirts. Visible from space, it was a warning to ET to never release another game on our planet.

METROID

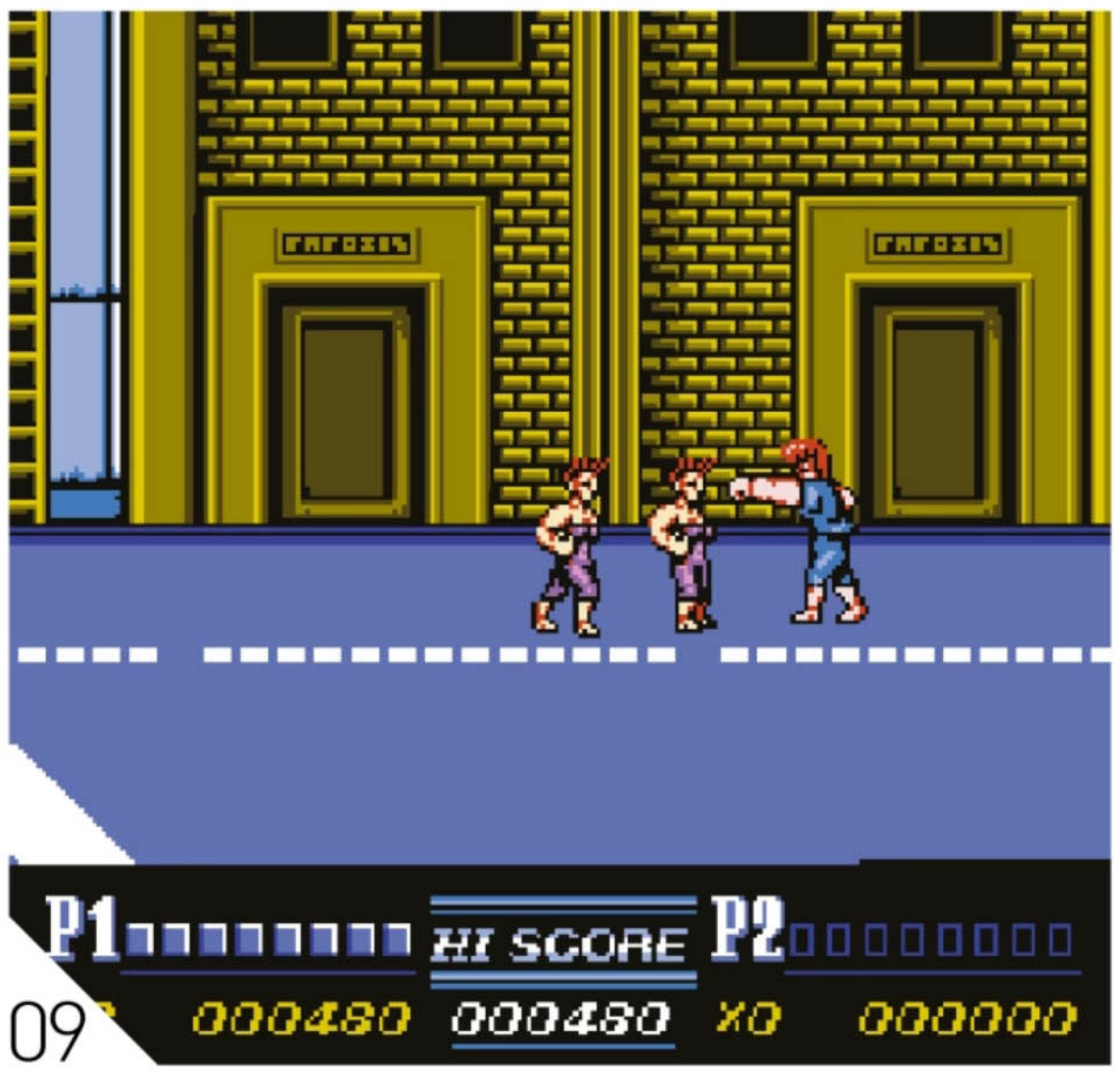
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *SUPER METROID*

07 **Long before Ms Croft raided her first tomb there was another tough female playing a central role in an iconic franchise.** Donning unflattering yellow armour and forced to wear a red spaceship on her head, you really couldn't tell whether Samus Aran was man, woman or beast. But one bash of the B button, sparking her elegant flip, gave us all the proof we needed. *Metroid* is a landmark NES title, the space shooter introduced password saves, non-linear levels and multiple endings. Its dark, menacing setting housed some truly freaky inhabitants, and the Giger-style levels really helped emanates a bleak, lonely atmosphere from inside the grey box.

CONTRA

- » **RELEASED:** 1988
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** KONAMI
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *METAL GEAR*

08 **It must be written into our genes that when visited by an alien it's customary to either destroy them or try to adopt them.** *Mario Bros* on steroids, the homeport of Konami's arcade hit *Contra* is considered to be the finest run-and-gun on the NES. It tells the story of two marines who are assigned the mission of welcoming an alien species by unloading an ungodly amount of ammunition into their deformed domes. The game presents some inspired character and level designs, the most memorable being the breach of an alien base, which switched the perspective from a side-scrolling blaster to a Cabal-style shooting gallery.



09

DOUBLE DRAGON 2 – THE REVENGE

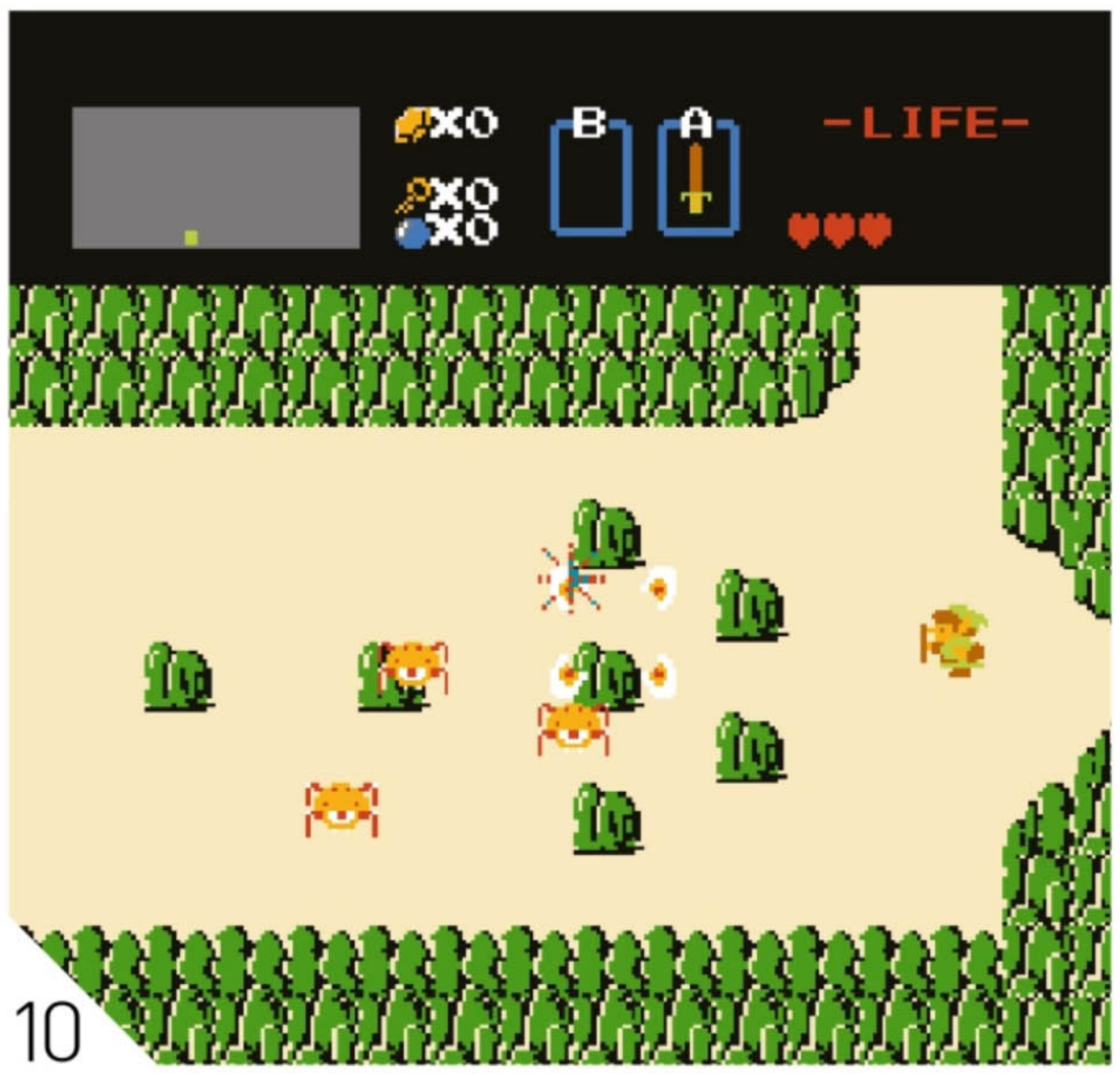
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** TECHNOS
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *RENEGADE*

09 **Taking on a darker tone than its predecessor, *Double Dragon 2* still follows the theme of the Lee brothers' ill luck with the opposite sex.** After their abducted girlfriend, Marian, is callously killed by Shadow Warrior, the brothers are forced into action. It's widely considered to be the finest of the three *Double Dragon* games released on the NES, due to its intuitive controls. It also introduced a much requested two-player co-op option and iconic moves like the Whirlwind Kick and the Hyper Uppercut – which looked a lot cooler than Billy and Jimmy's usual technique of pushing an enemy's head into their groin.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** *SKY SKIPPER*

10 **Sheathed inside a majestic gold cartridge, *The Legend Of Zelda*'s tale of a nefarious powermonger, an ensnared princess and an elfin boy, bound together by unlikely heroism, was a chameleon of game genres that pioneered open-ended gameplay.** Link's first quest not only popularised adventure games, it established pivotal precedents that spoke out to all platforms. It outmoded high-score tables by exposing a greater desire in gamers for exploration and completion, and encapsulated perhaps the most respected and well-loved games ever created. It was fathered by Nintendo with a proud tenderness and the NES was there to videotape the birth.



10

Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
NES VERSION
POWER
RESET

NES

and the rest...

There were literally hundreds of games for Nintendo's 8-bit console, ranging from the truly amazing to the terribly dire. Here are just a few of them. How many did you play?

01 DR MARIO
02 PARODIUS
03 SPY VS. SPY
04 DUCK TALES
05 IKARI WARRIORS
06 ROADBLASTERS
07 ARKANOID
08 GALAGA
09 LODE RUNNER
10 SOCCER
11 GUN·SMOKE
12 BALLOON FIGHT
13 MANIAC MANSION
14 ROD LAND
15 COBRA TRIANGLE
16 KUNG FU
17 THE NEW ZEALAND STORY
18 MIGHTY FINAL FIGHT
19 XEVIOUS
20 LEMMINGS
21 BLUE SHADOW
22 THE GOONIES II
23 PUYO PUYO
24 SUPER MARIO BROS
25 THE LAST NINJA
26 DONKEY KONG
27 PIRATES!
28 SOLOMON'S KEY
29 CASTLEVANIA
30 KICK OFF
31 RAMPAGE
32 GAUNTLET II
33 BASEBALL
34 LIFE FORCE
35 ADVENTURE ISLAND
36 IMPOSSIBLE MISSION II
37 SHATTERHAND
38 DOUBLE DRAGON
39 LUNAR POOL
40 RIVER CITY RANSOM
41 TENNIS
42 METAL GEAR
43 EXCITEBIKE
44 MS PAC-MAN
45 RENEGADE
46 NINJA GAIDEN
47 GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS
48 CASTLEVANIA III: DRACULA'S CURSE
49 BIONIC COMMANDO
50 MEGA MAN
51 STAR WARS
52 TETRIS 2
53 DUCK HUNT
54 HUANG DI
55 GHOSTBUSTERS II
56 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
57 ICE HOCKEY
58 SUPER MARIO BROS 2
59 TRACK & FIELD 2
60 THE ADVENTURES OF BAYOU BILLY
61 WARIO'S WOODS
62 DEVIL WORLD
63 SWORDS AND SERPENTS
64 PAPERBOY
65 RAMBO
66 PROBOTECTOR
67 FINAL FANTASY
68 CABAL
69 M.U.L.E.
70 RYGAR
71 GOLF
72 URBAN CHAMPION
73 PAC-MAN
74 SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
75 ROBOCOP
76 1942
77 YOSHI'S COOKIE
78 ICE CLIMBER
79 PRINCE OF PERSIA
80 WIZARDS & WARRIORS
81 QUINTY
82 COMMANDO
83 PUNCH-OUT!!
84 RUSH 'N ATTACK
85 SIDE POCKET
86 A BOY AND HIS BLOB
87 FANTASTIC DIZZY

01
Dr.MARIO
TOP 0010000
SCORE 0000400
LEVEL 00
SPEED MED
VIRUS

02

03
WHITE
TIME 04:18
POWER
BLACK
TIME 03:48
POWER

16
PLAYER
ENEMY

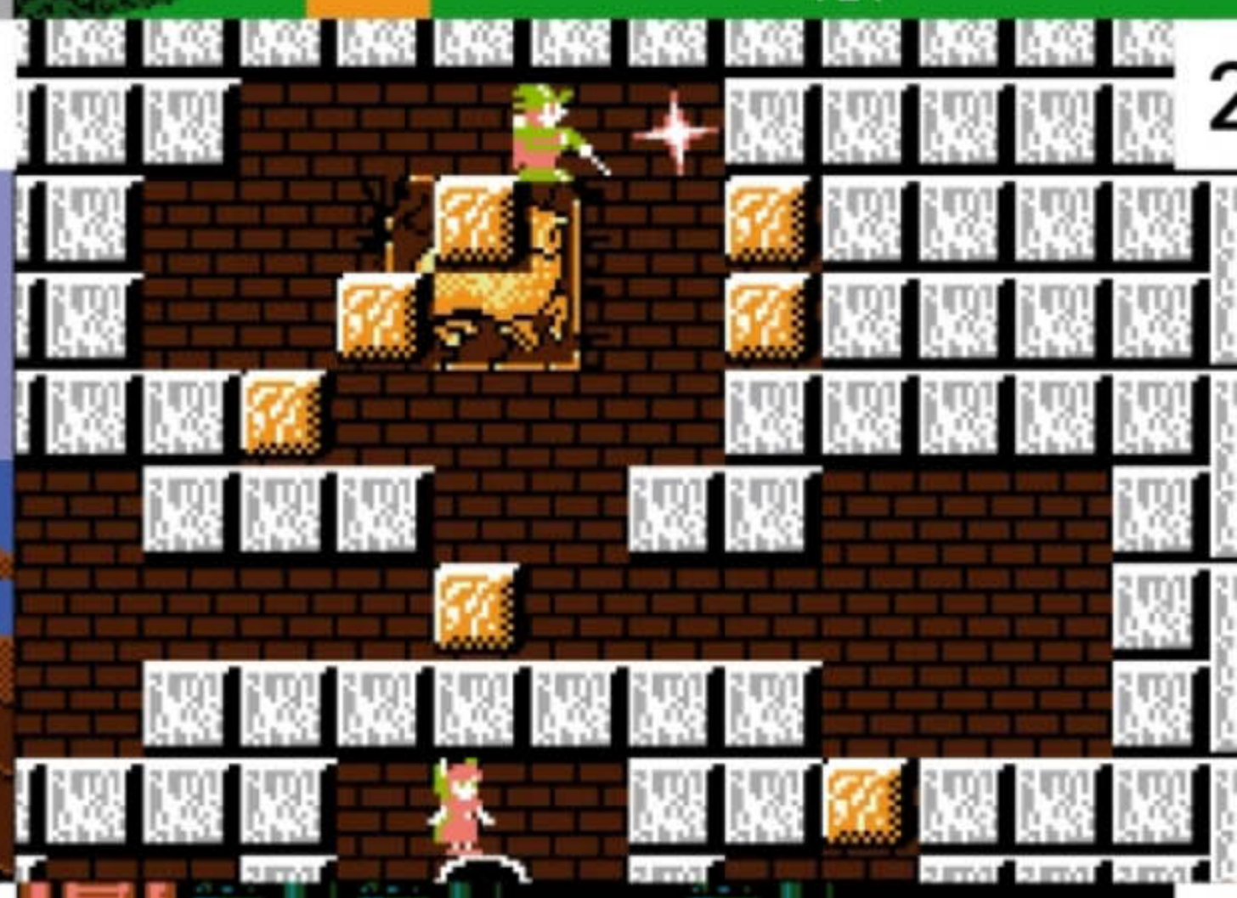
17

18
ENEMY
PL x5
ROOM
SALE
SALE

25
003000
00:00:09

26
I·000000
1UP·000000
BONUS 4600

27



34

35

36

43

44

45

52
ROUND 01
SPEED MED 06
TOP 000030
SCORE 000030

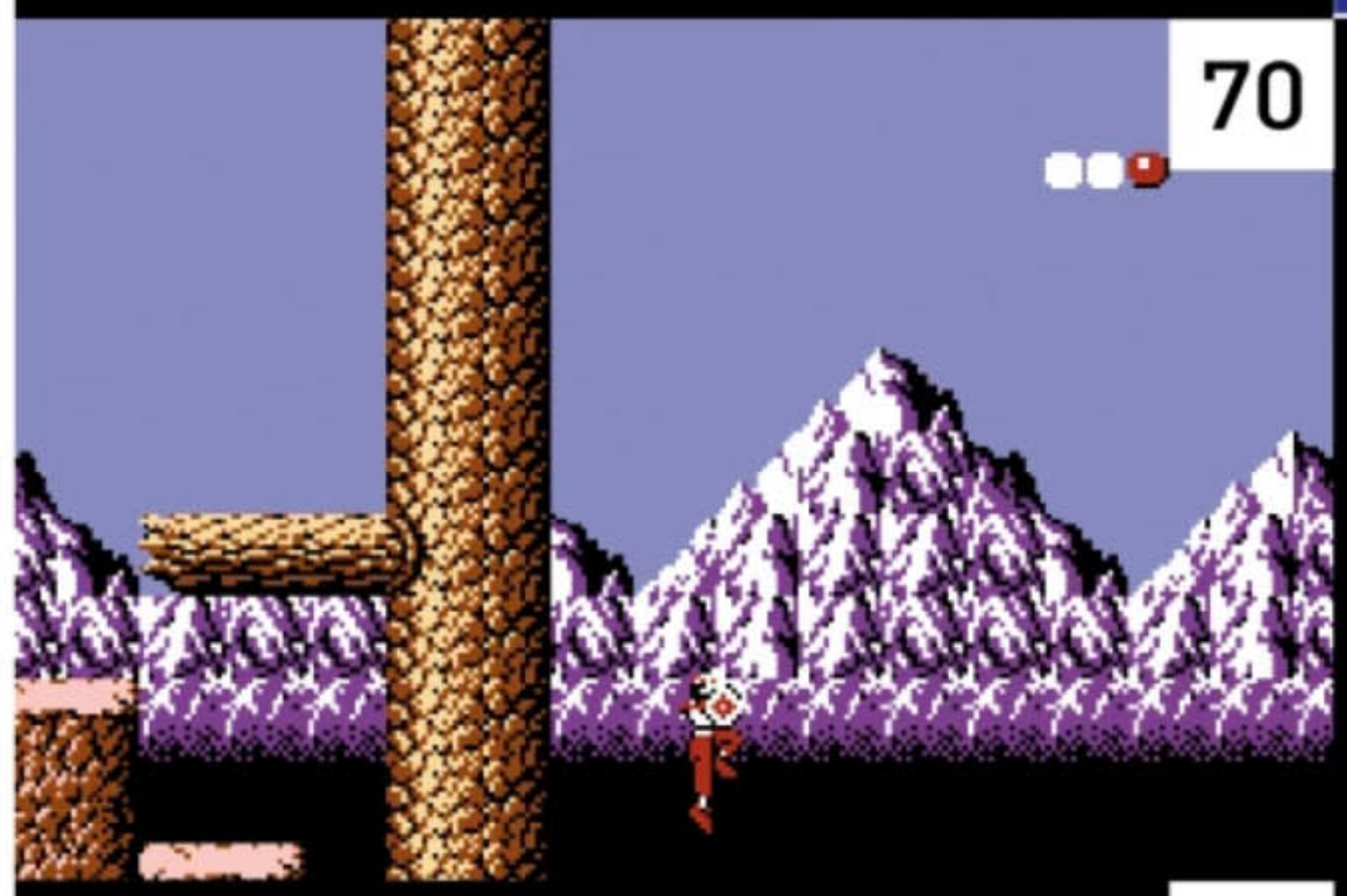
53

54

61

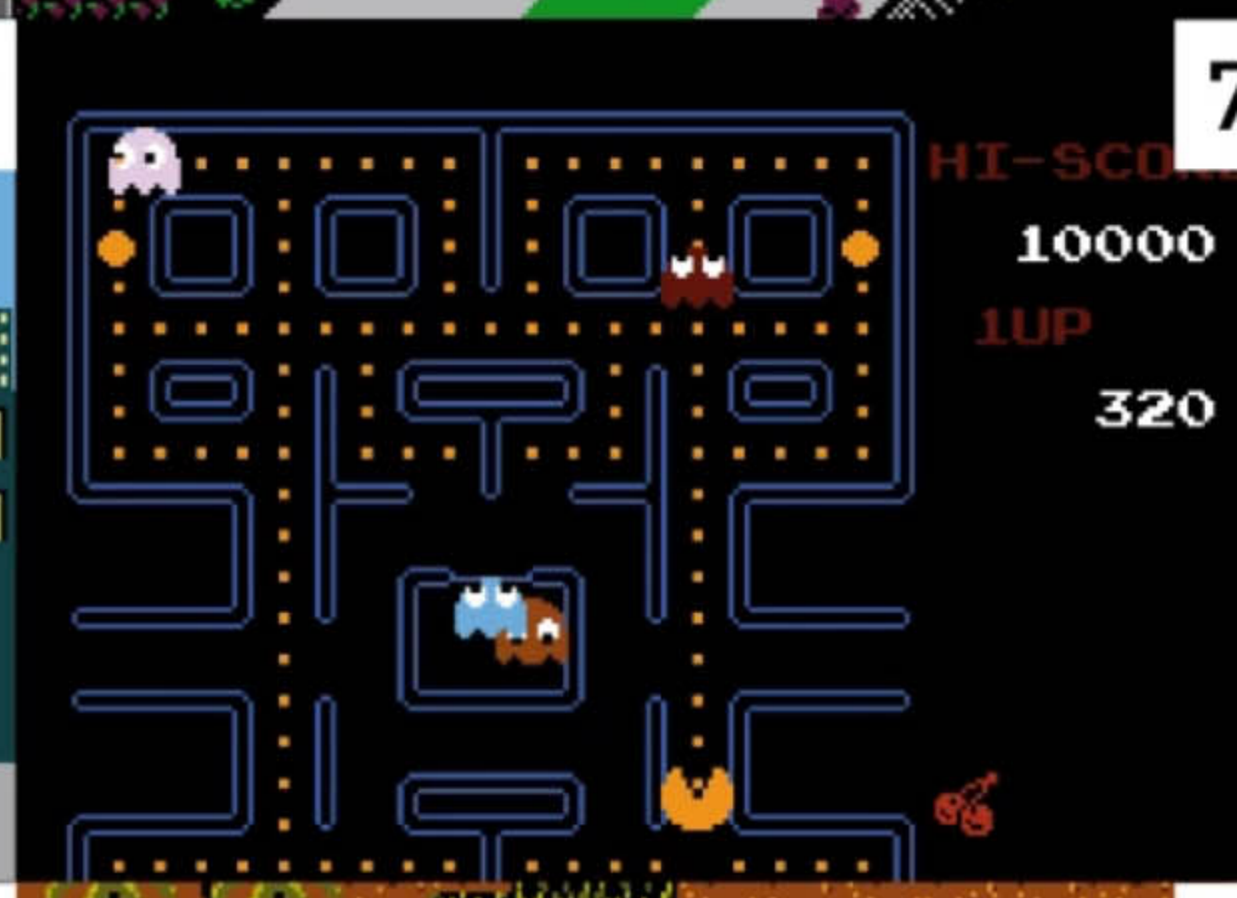
62

63


70

71
357m
PAR 4
WIND
↓ 6m
SHOT
SCORE
1·0
±0
0

72

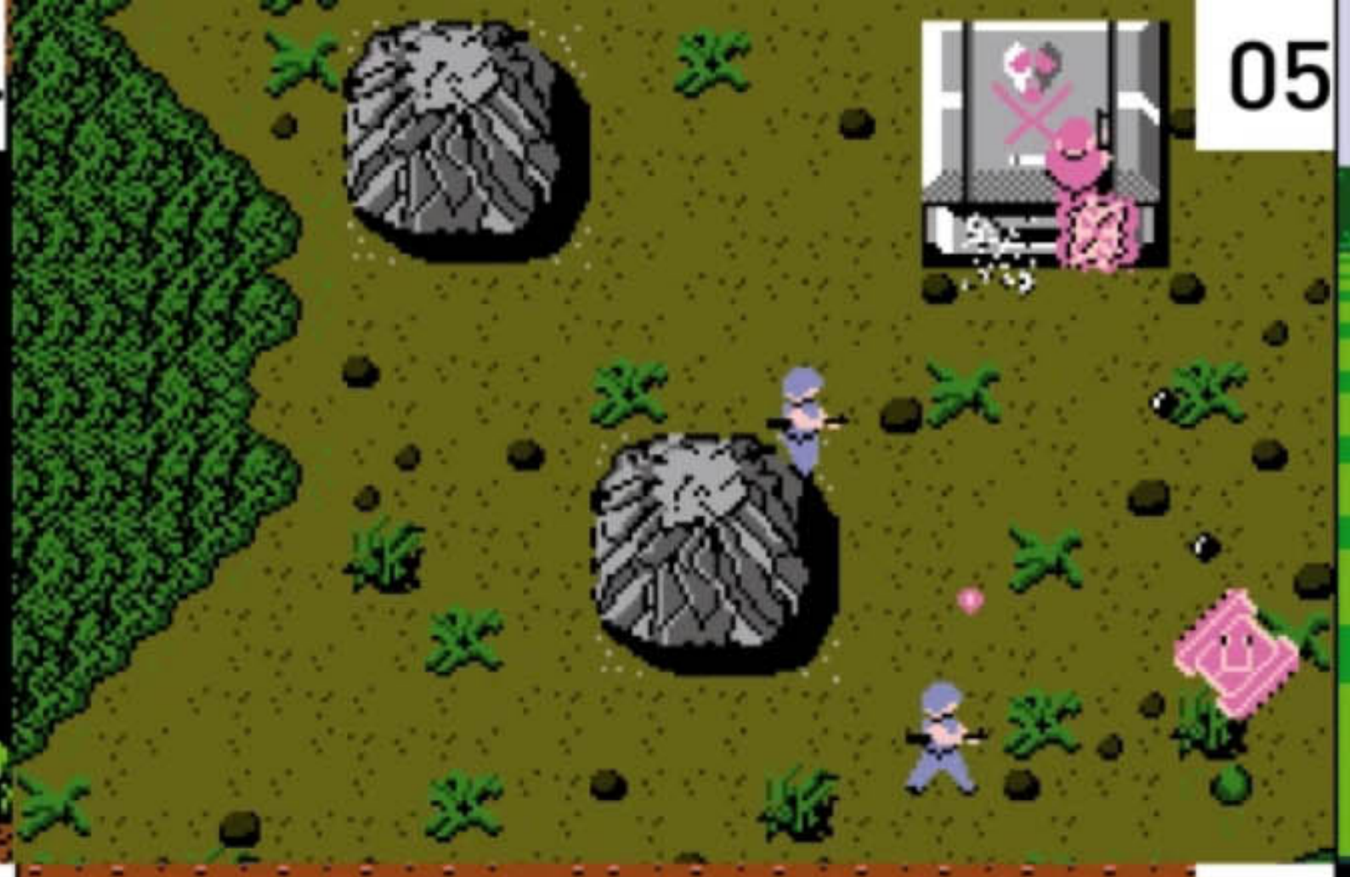

10000
1UP
320

79

80

81

05



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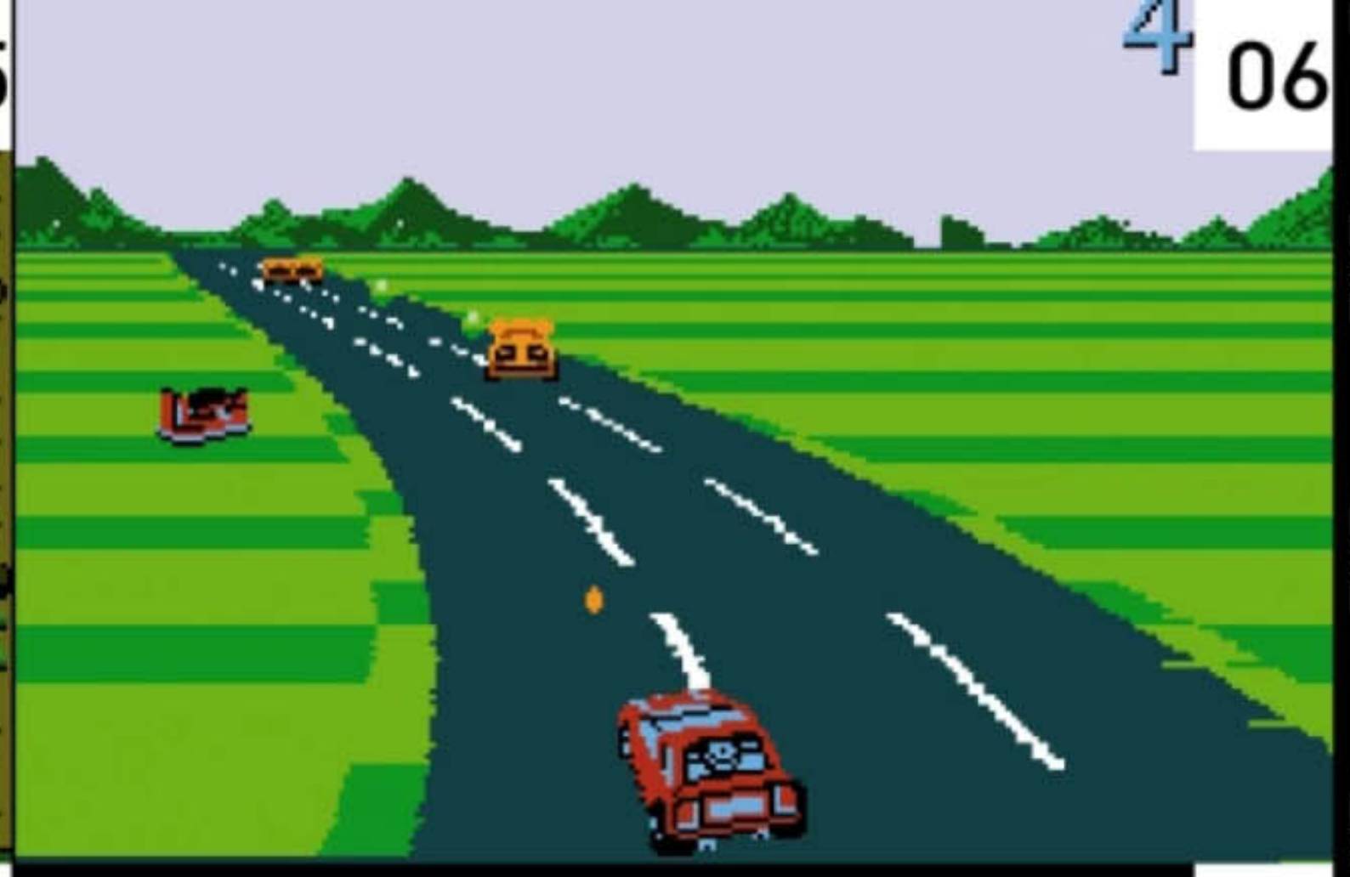

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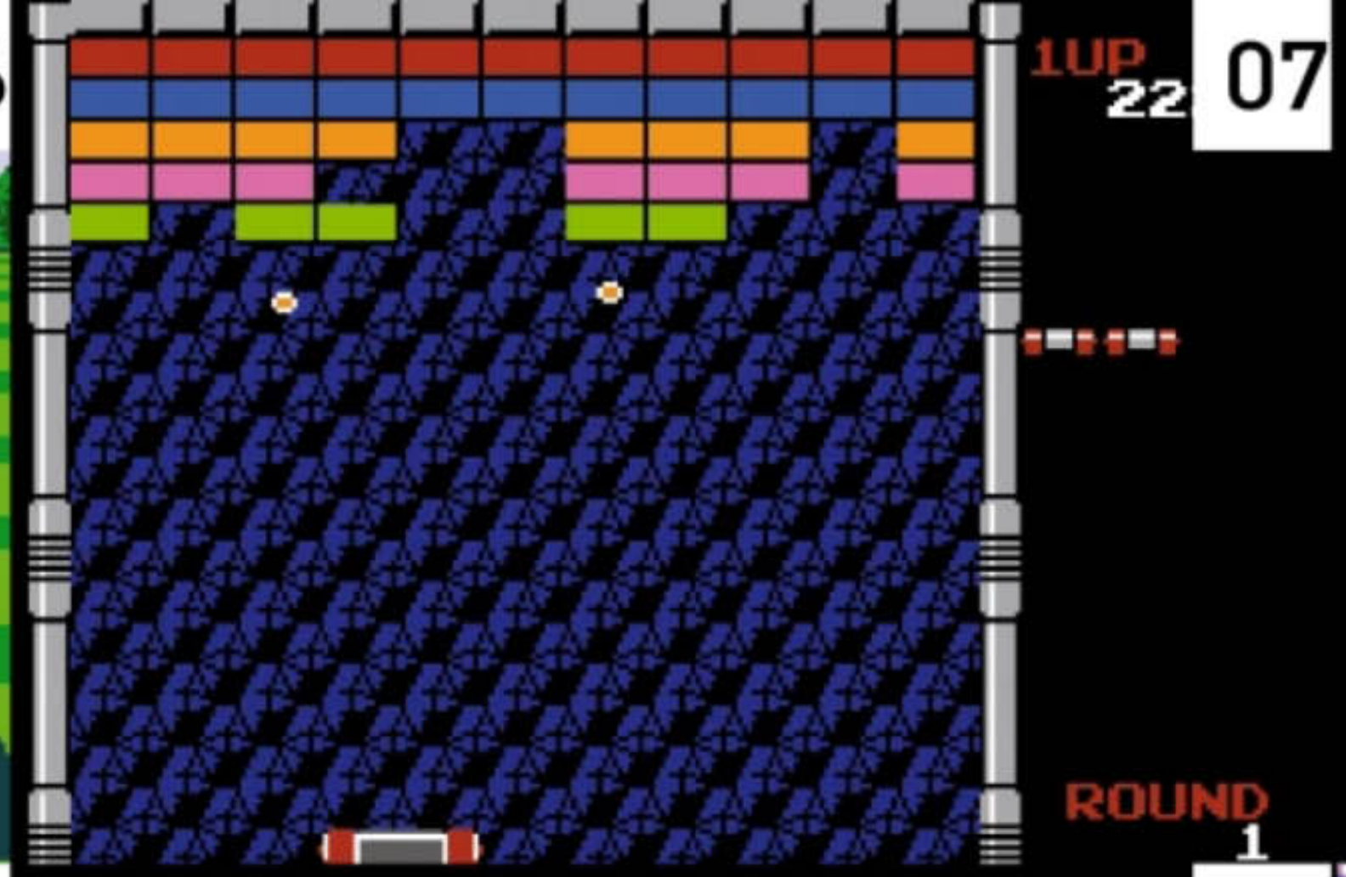
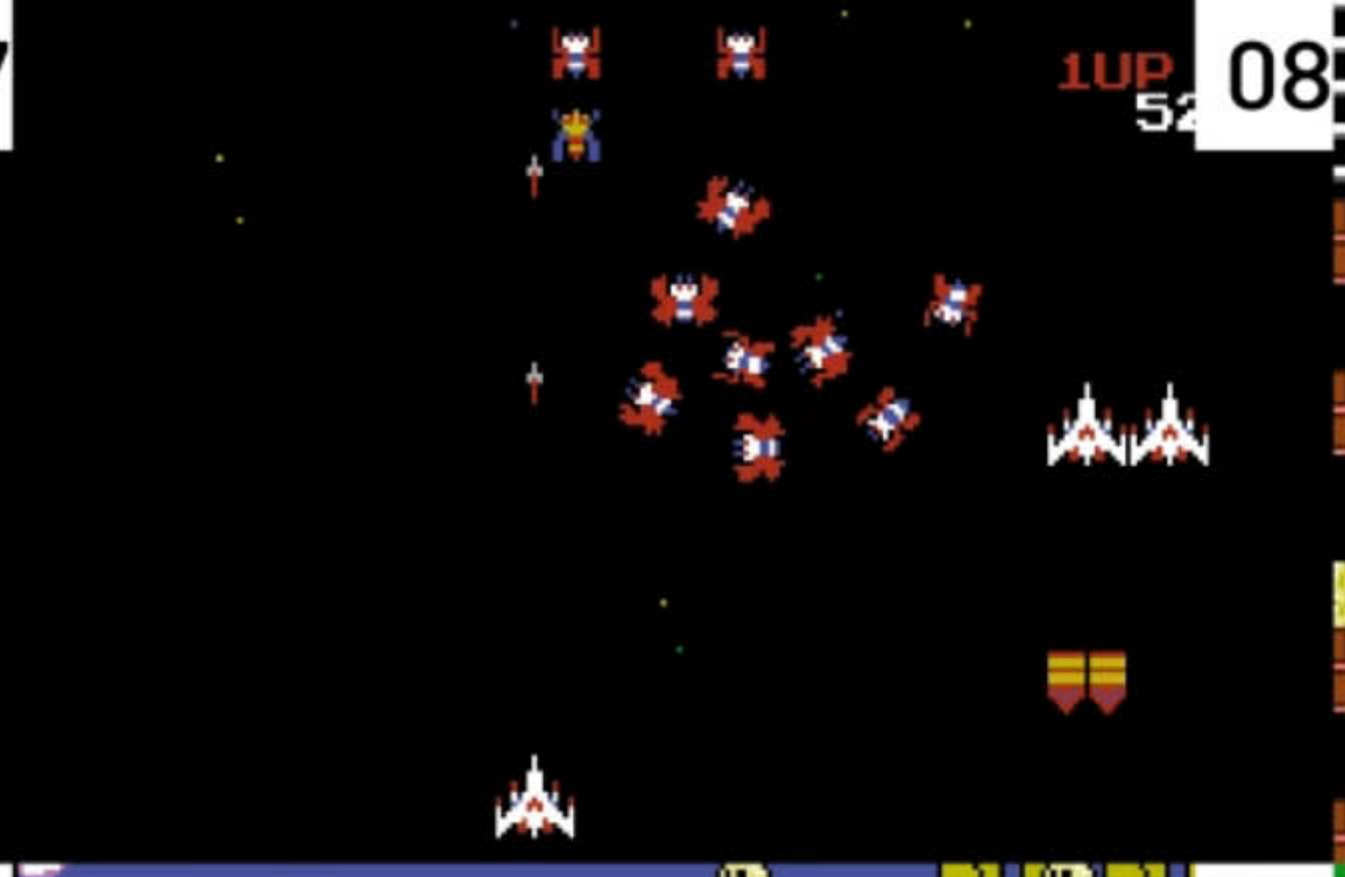

1UP
22
ROUND
1

08



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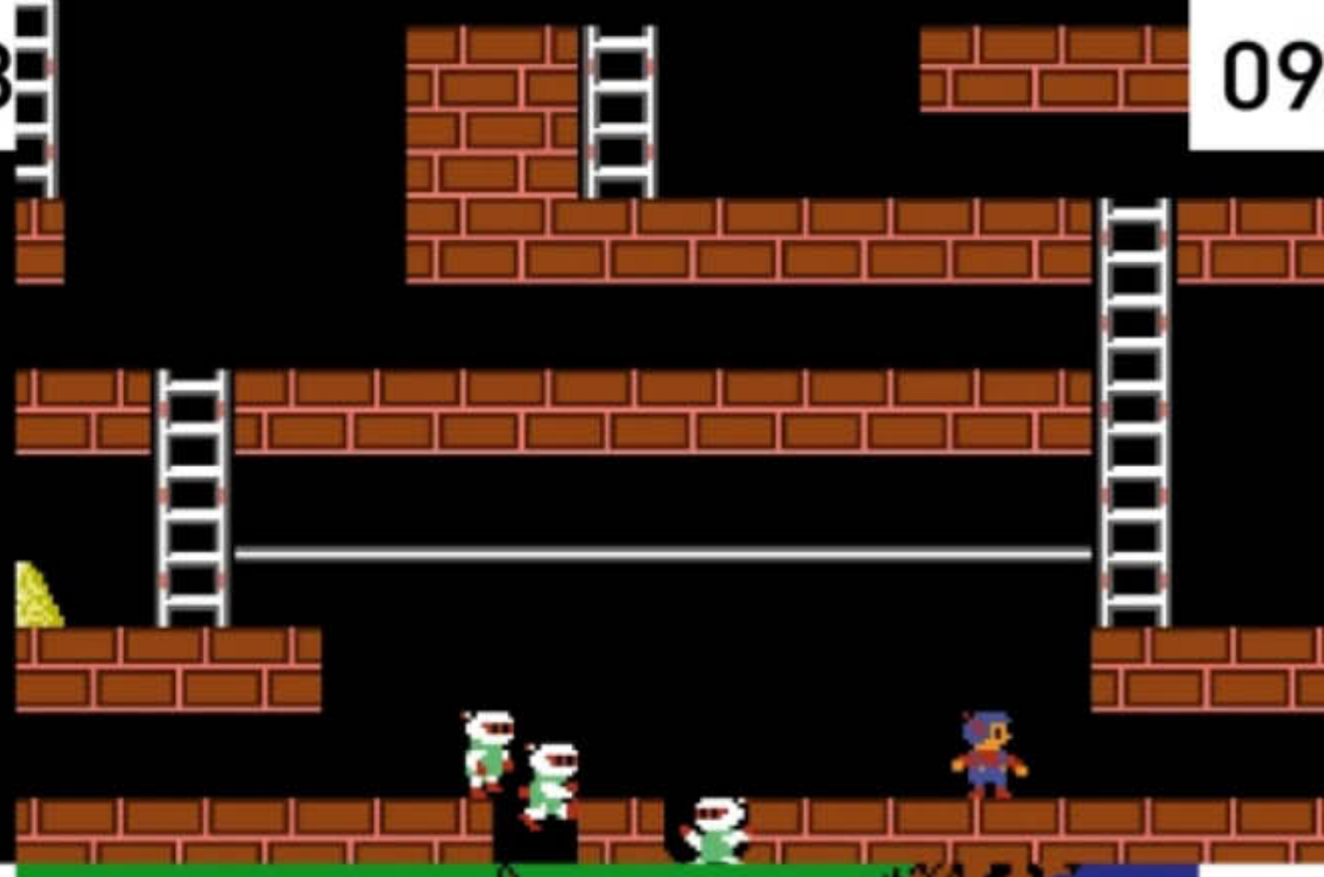

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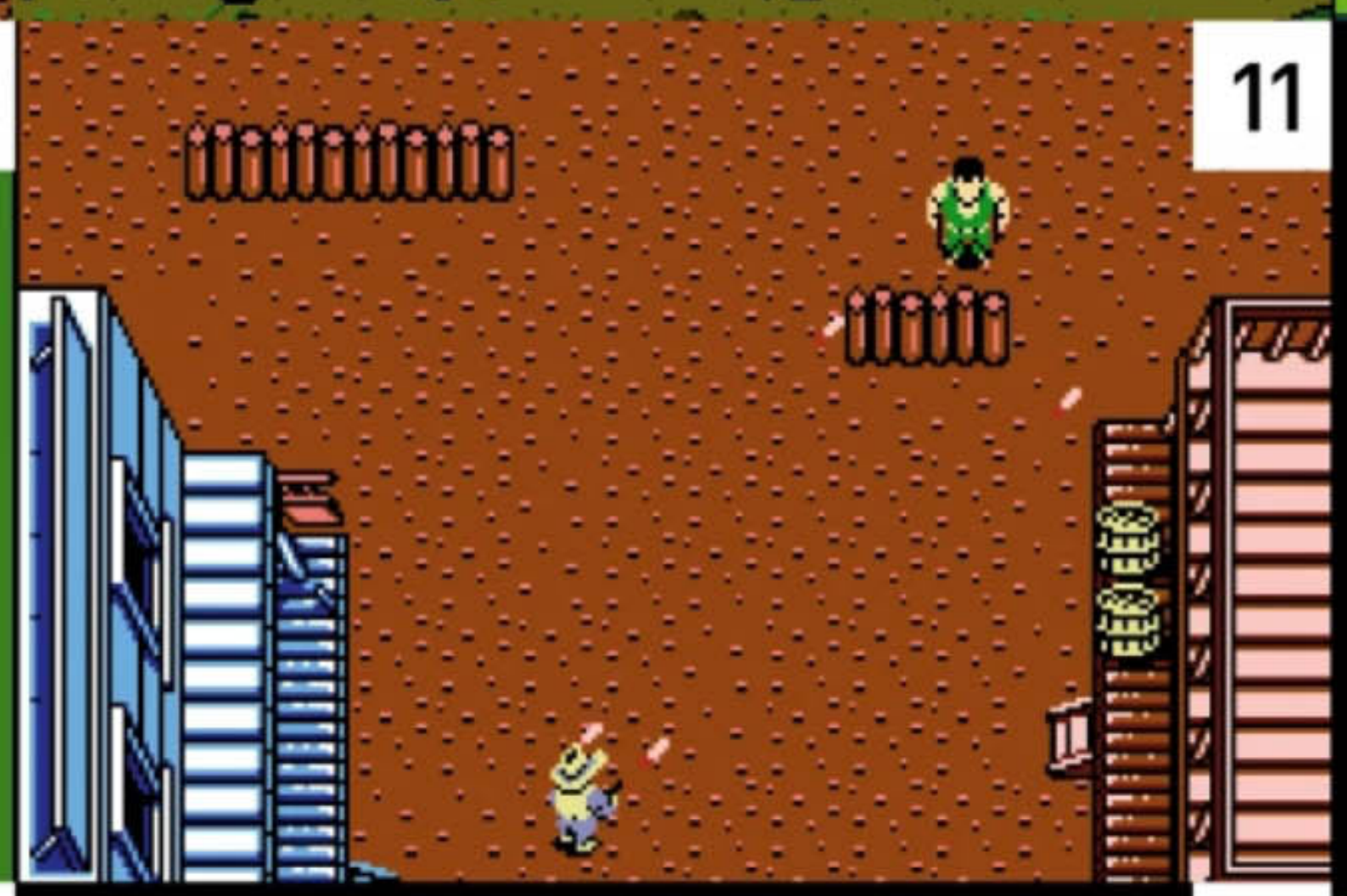

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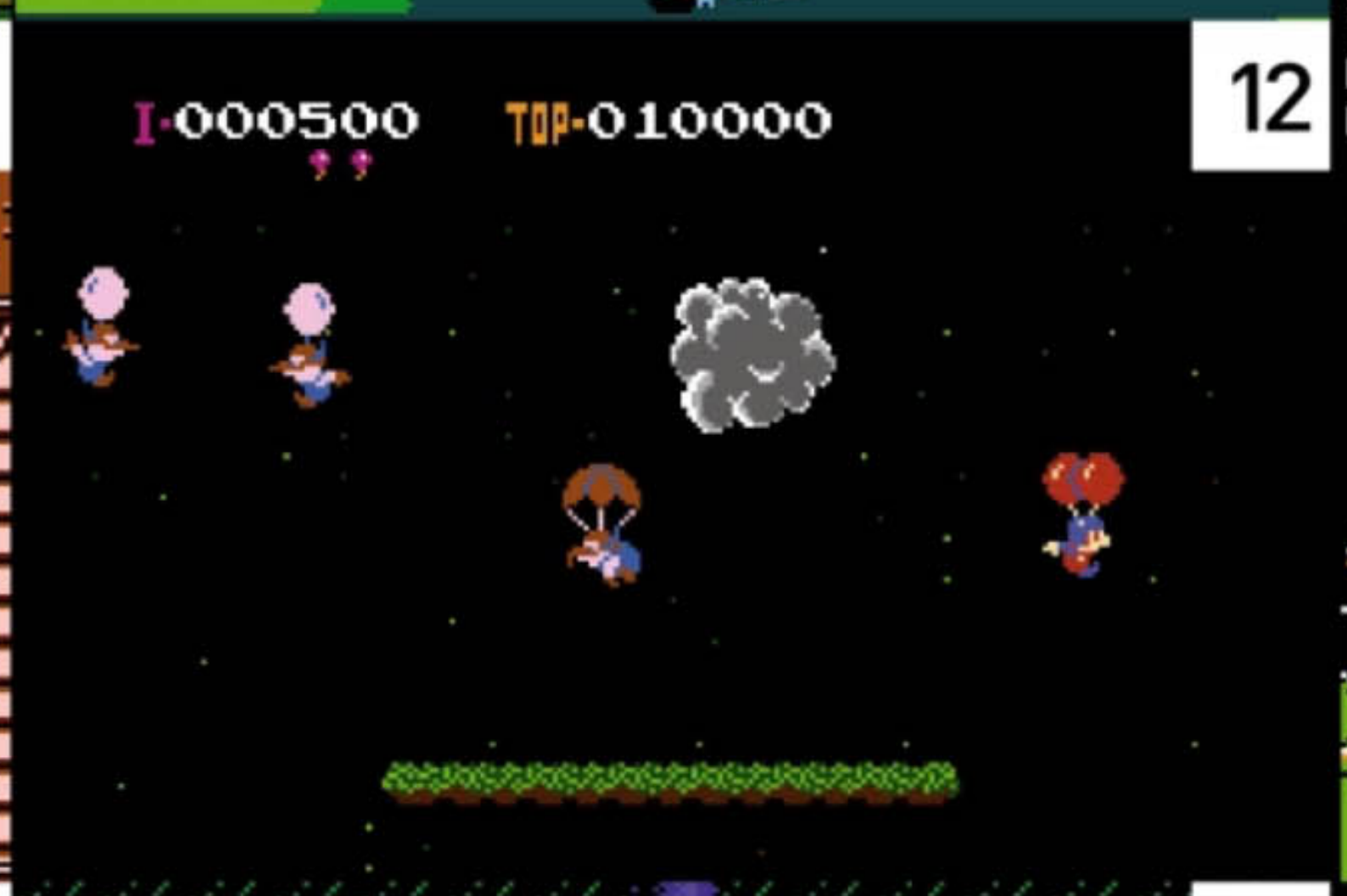
I-000500
TOP-010000

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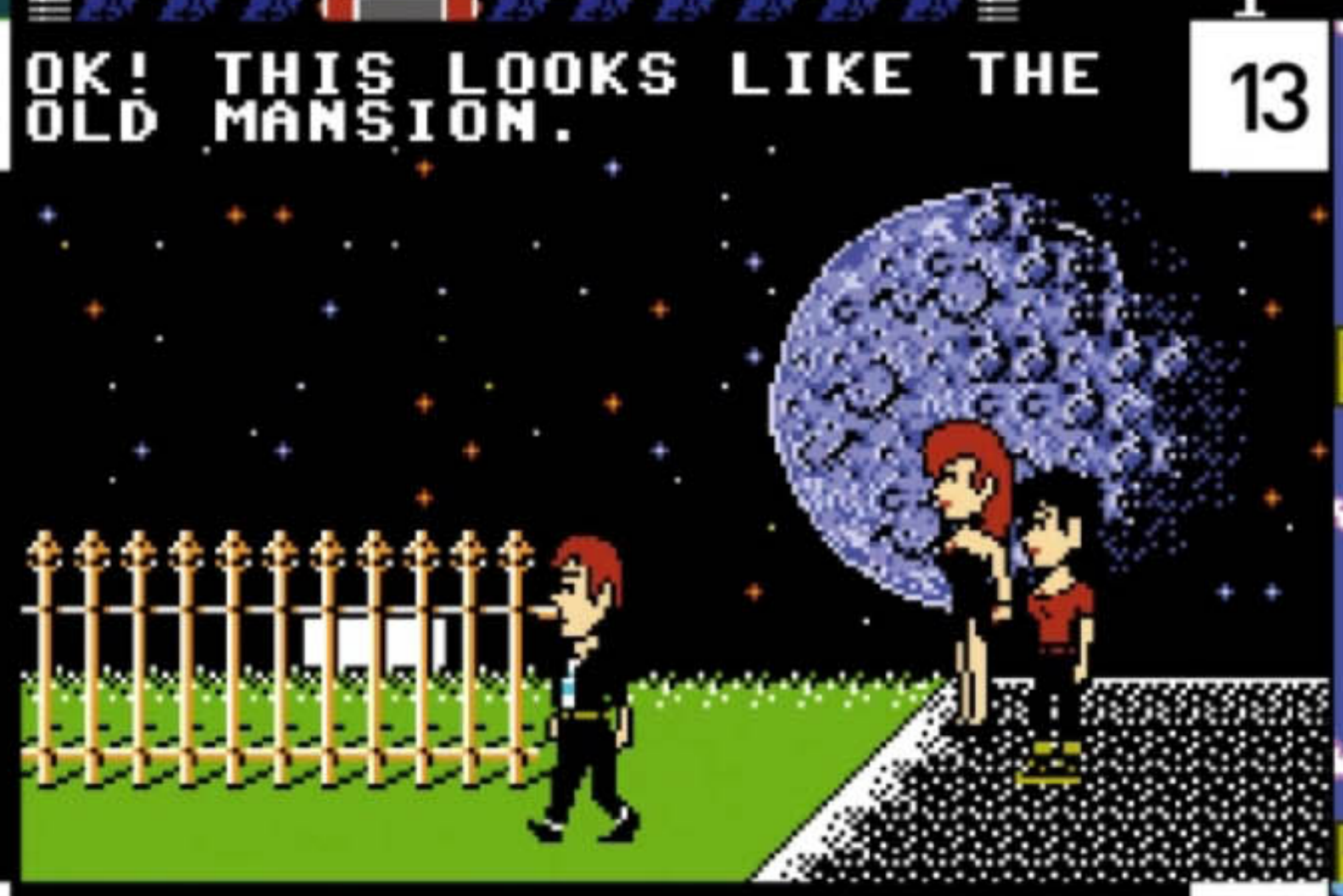
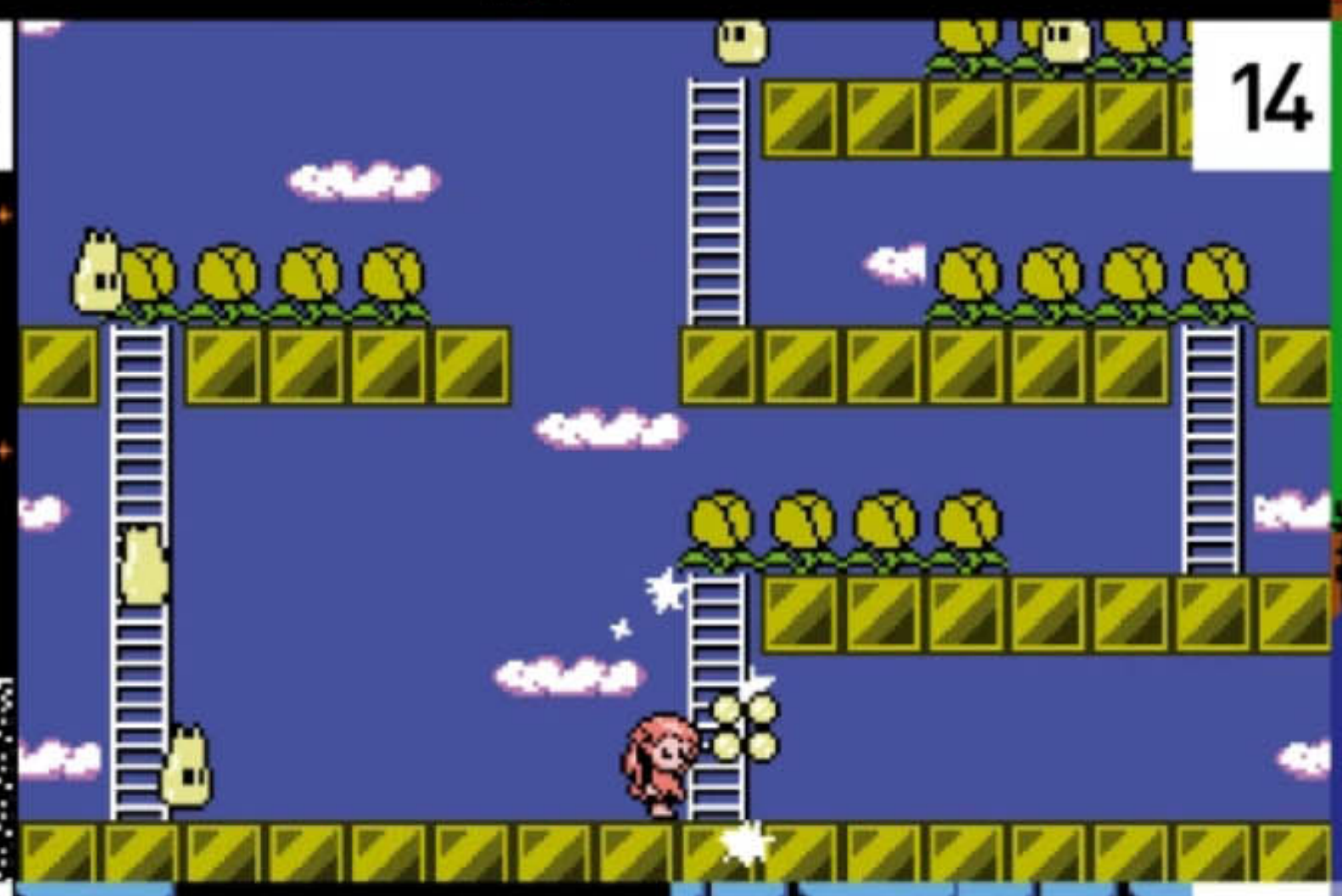

OK! THIS LOOKS LIKE THE
OLD MANSION.

14



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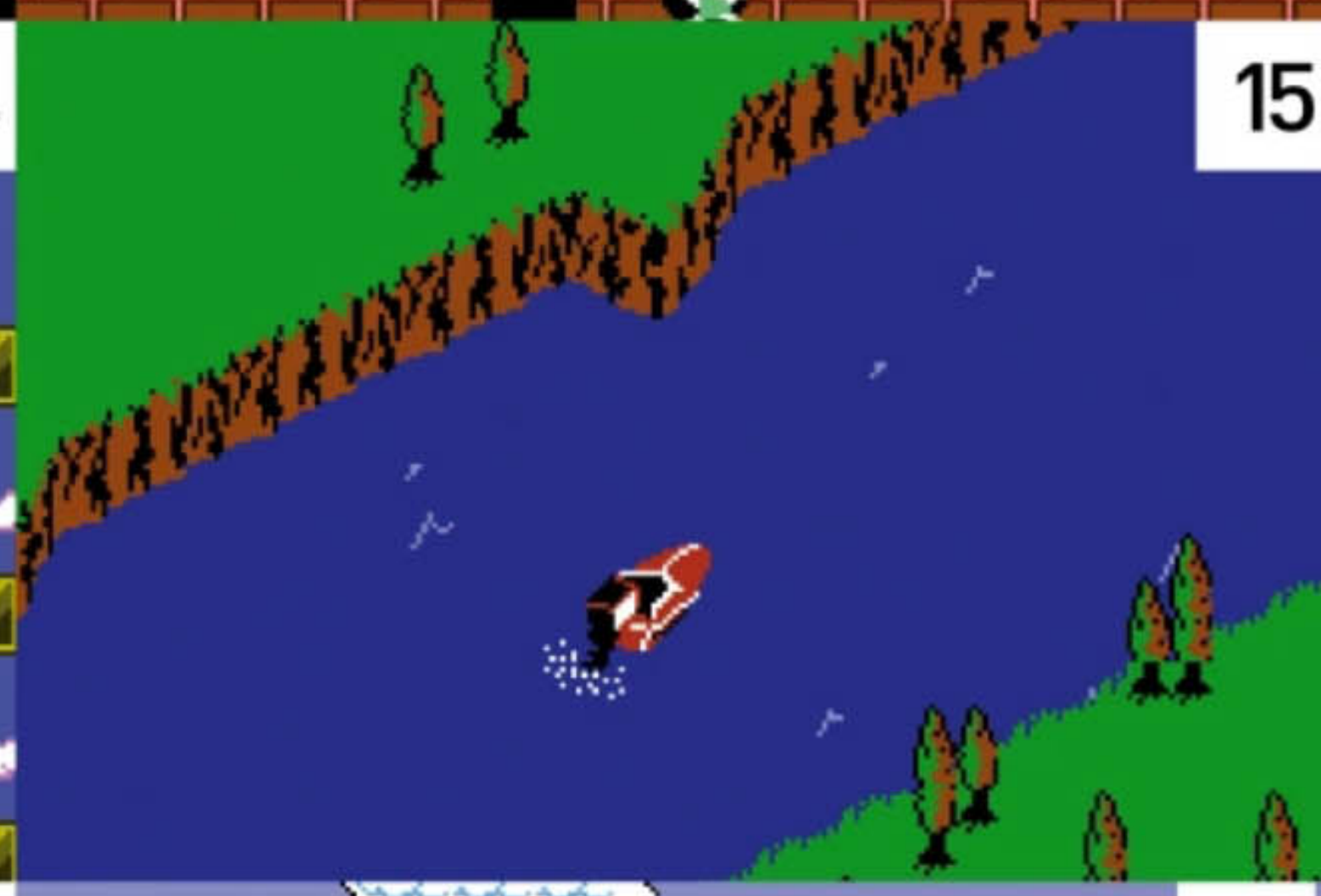

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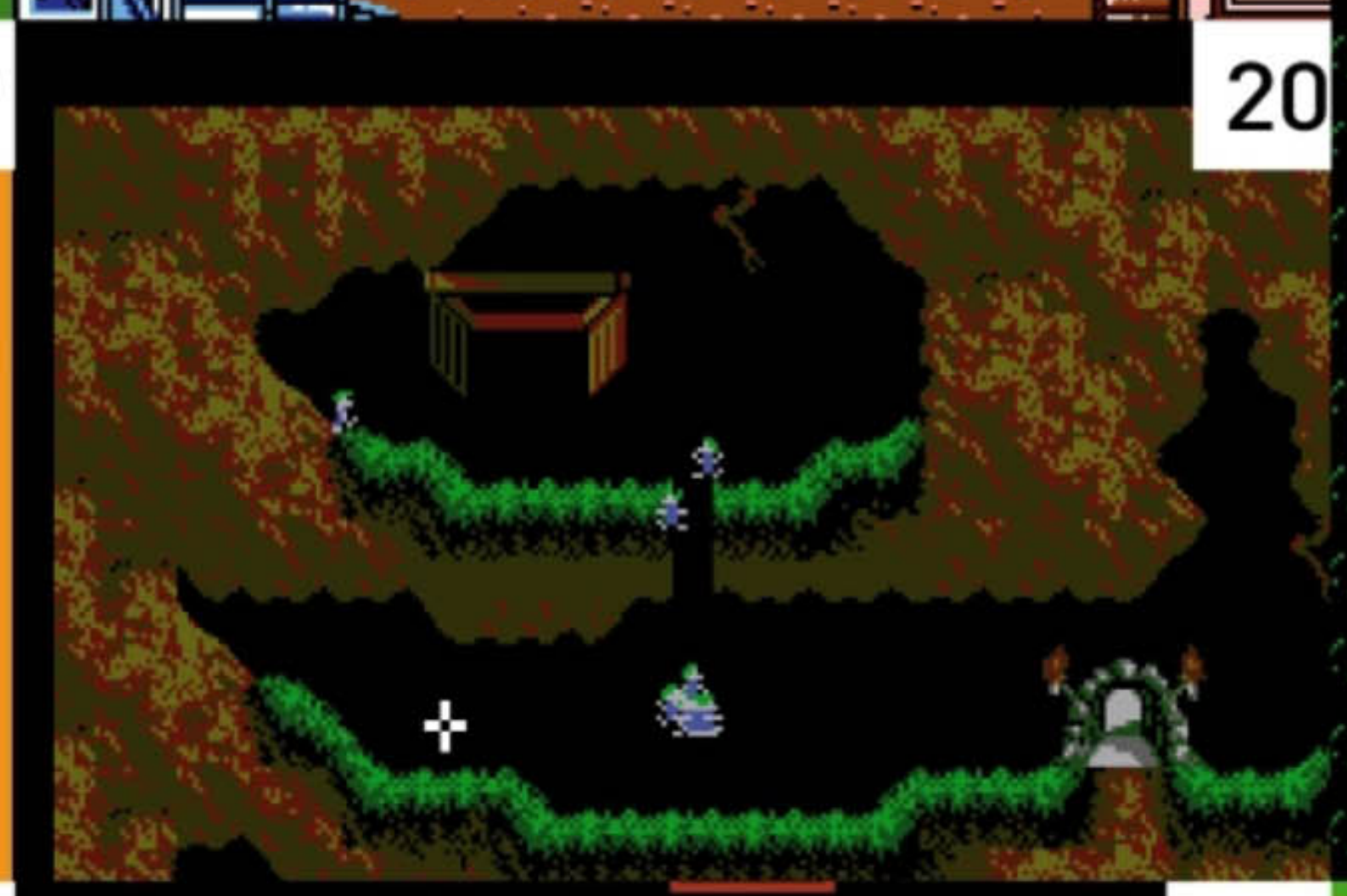

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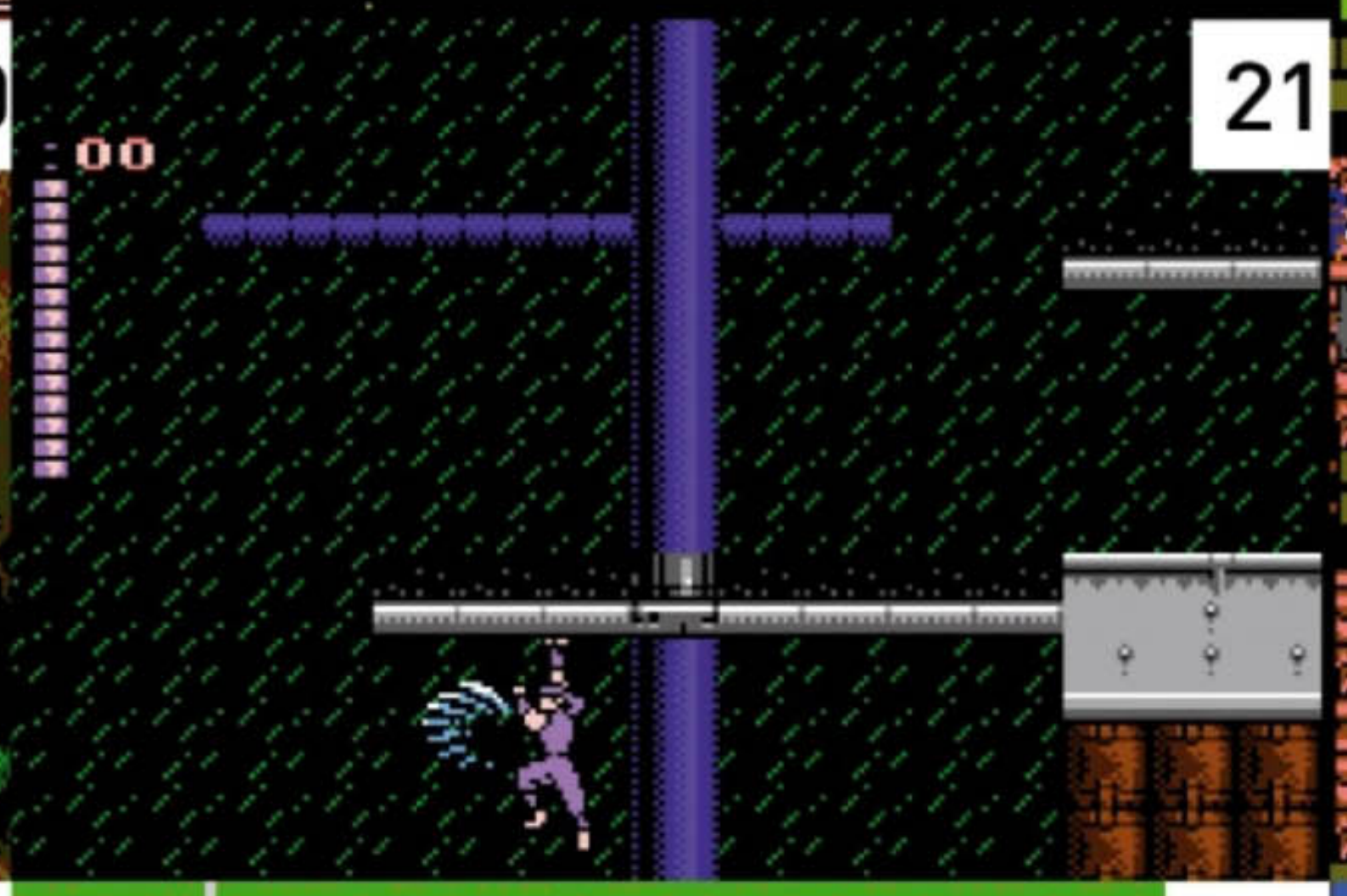

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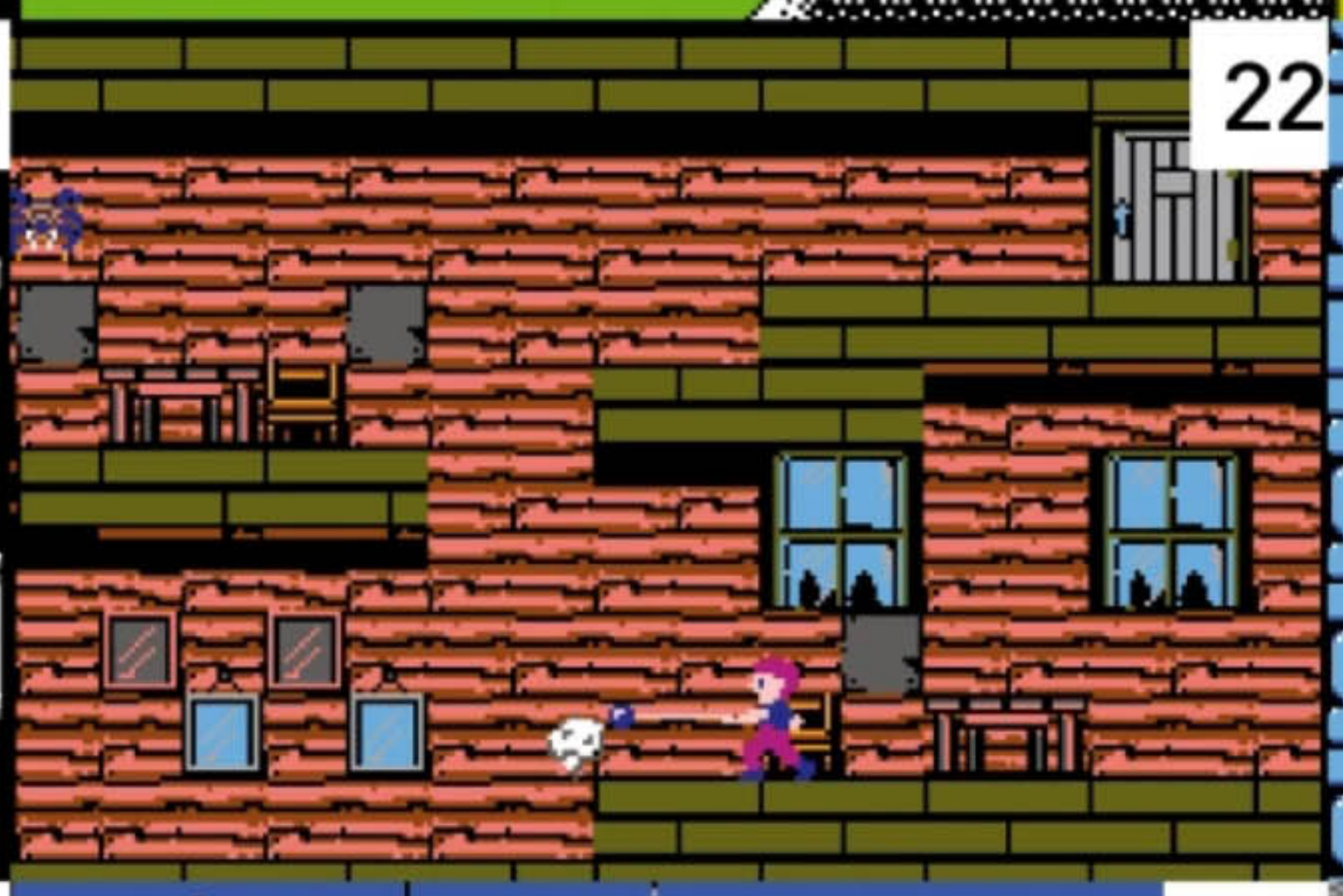

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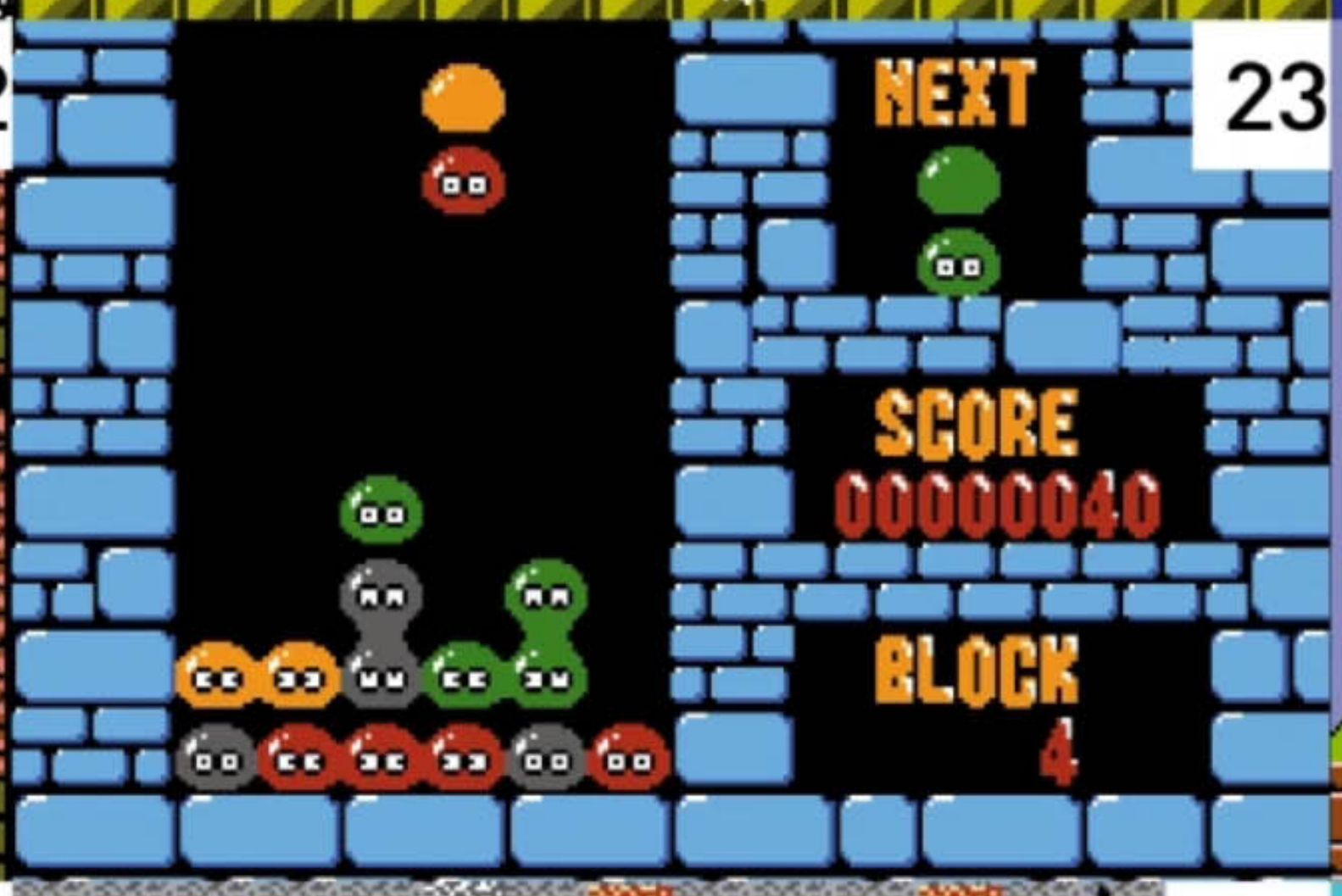
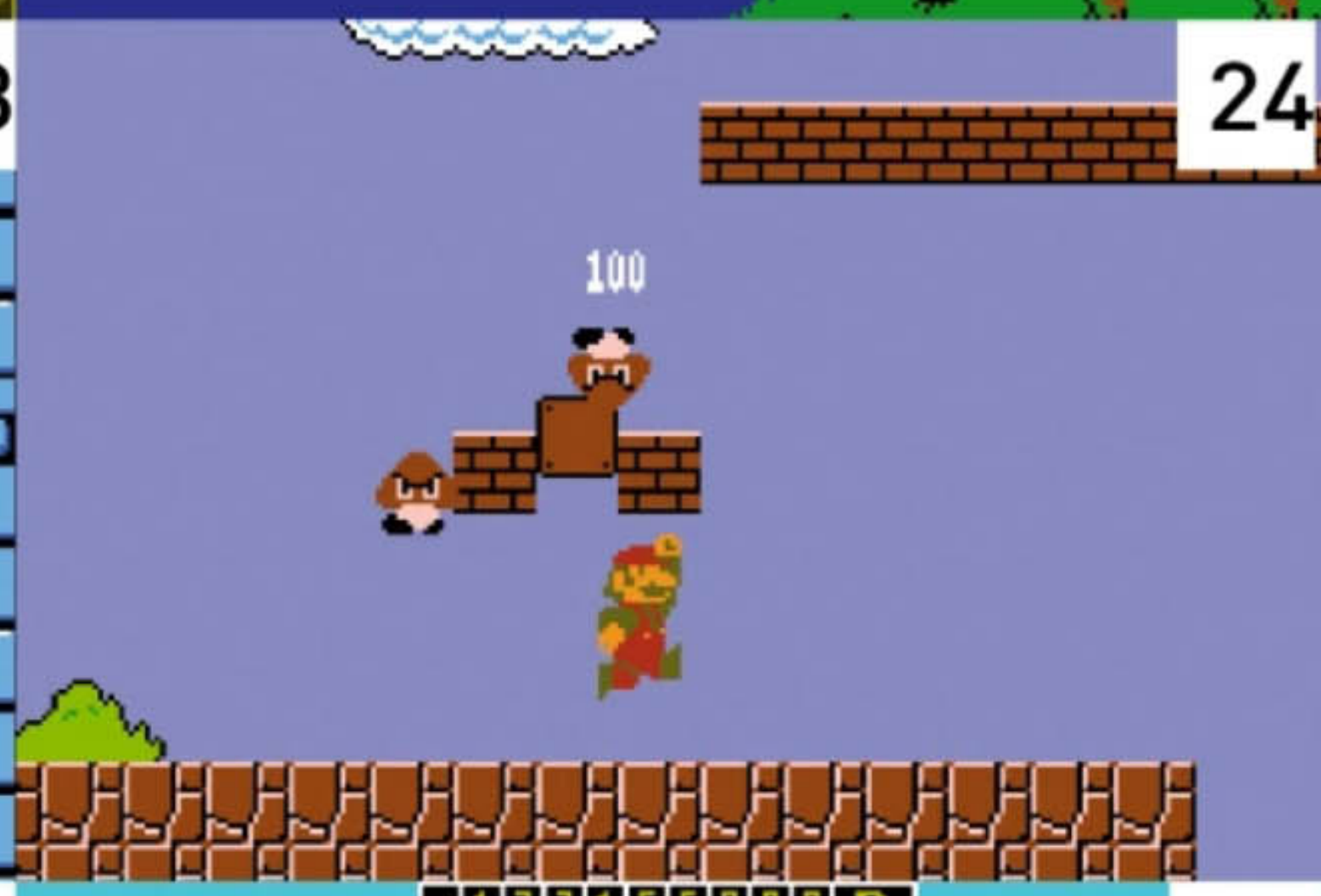

NEXT
SCORE
00000040
BLOCK
4

24



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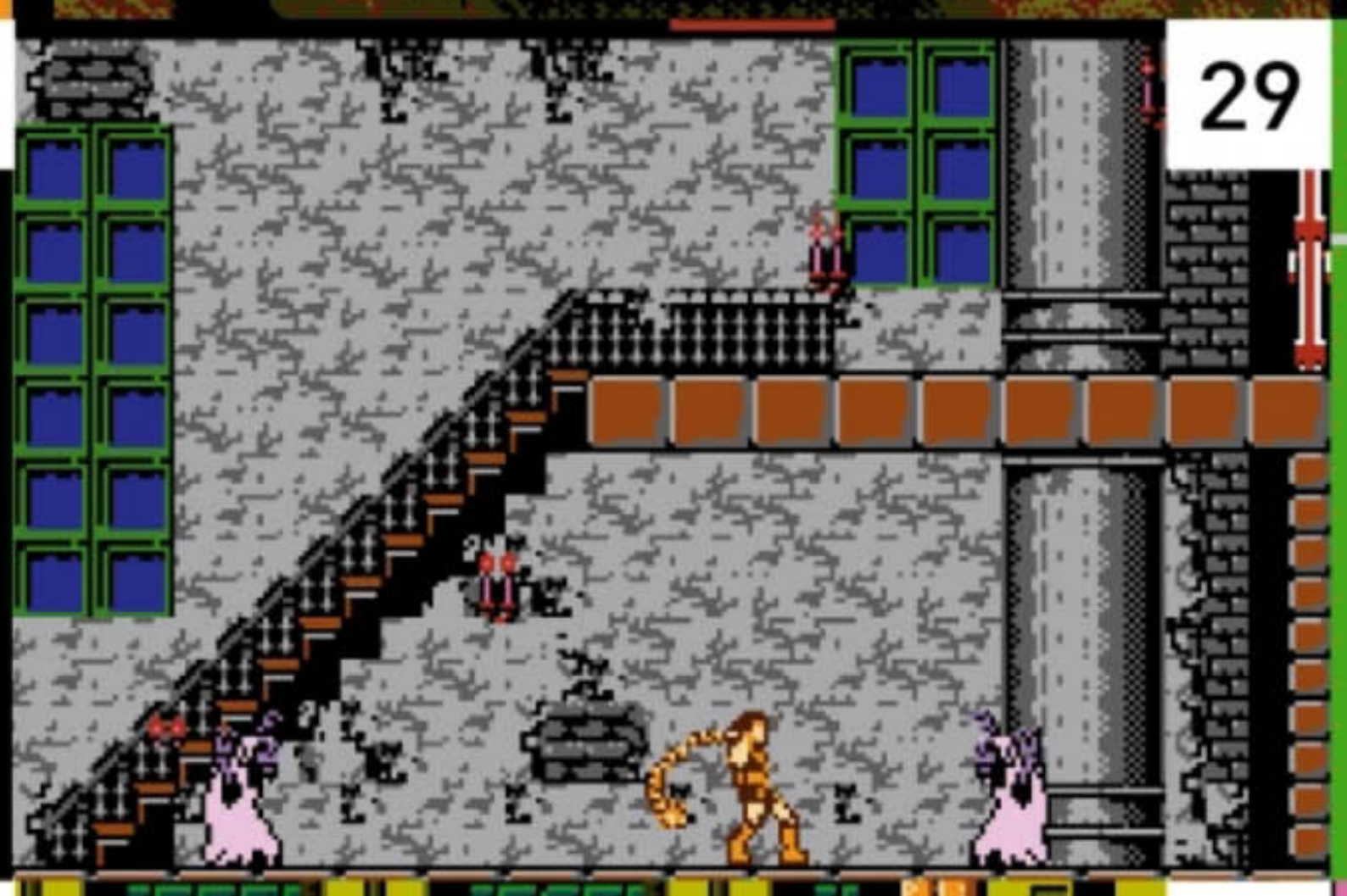

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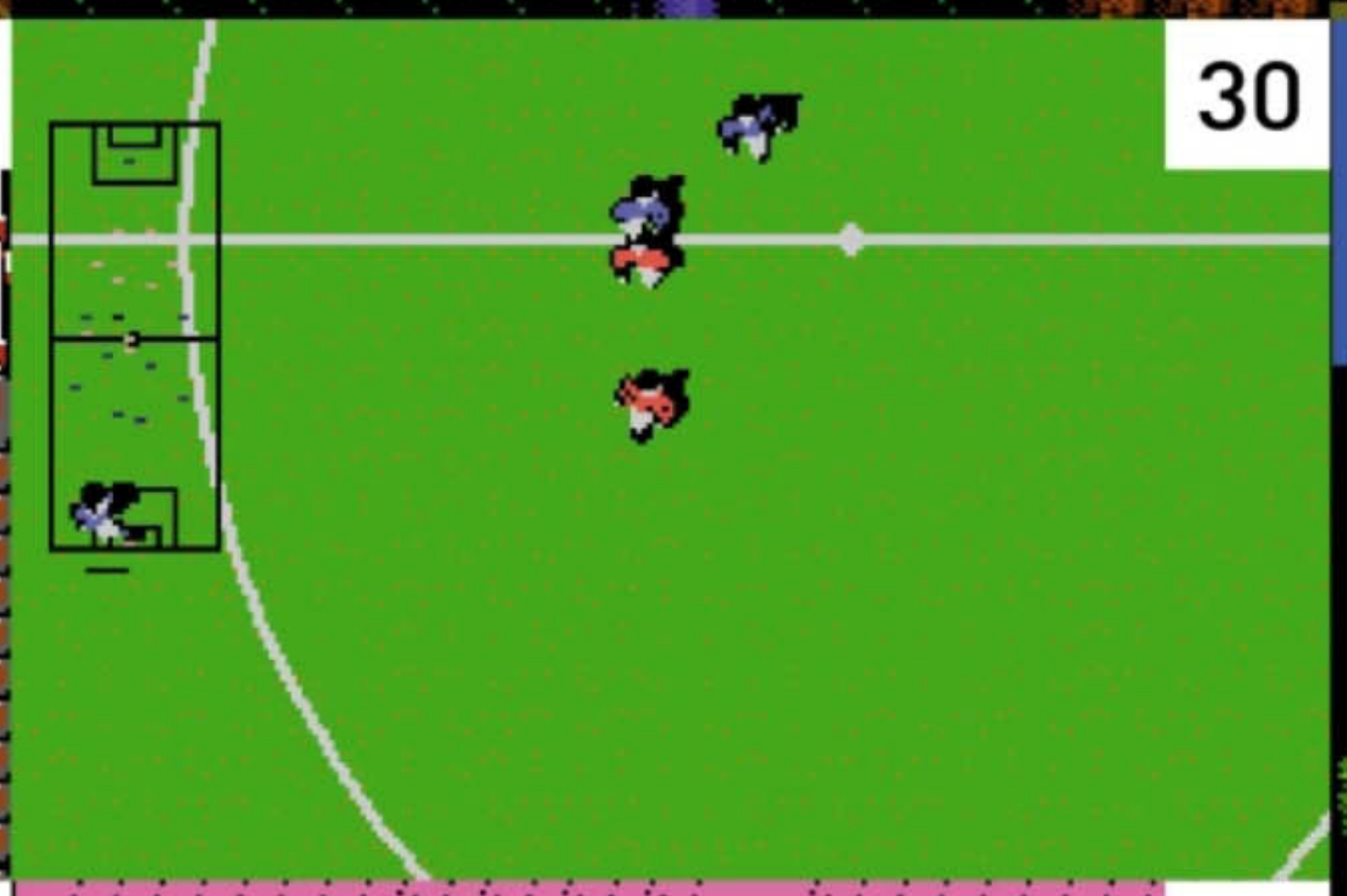

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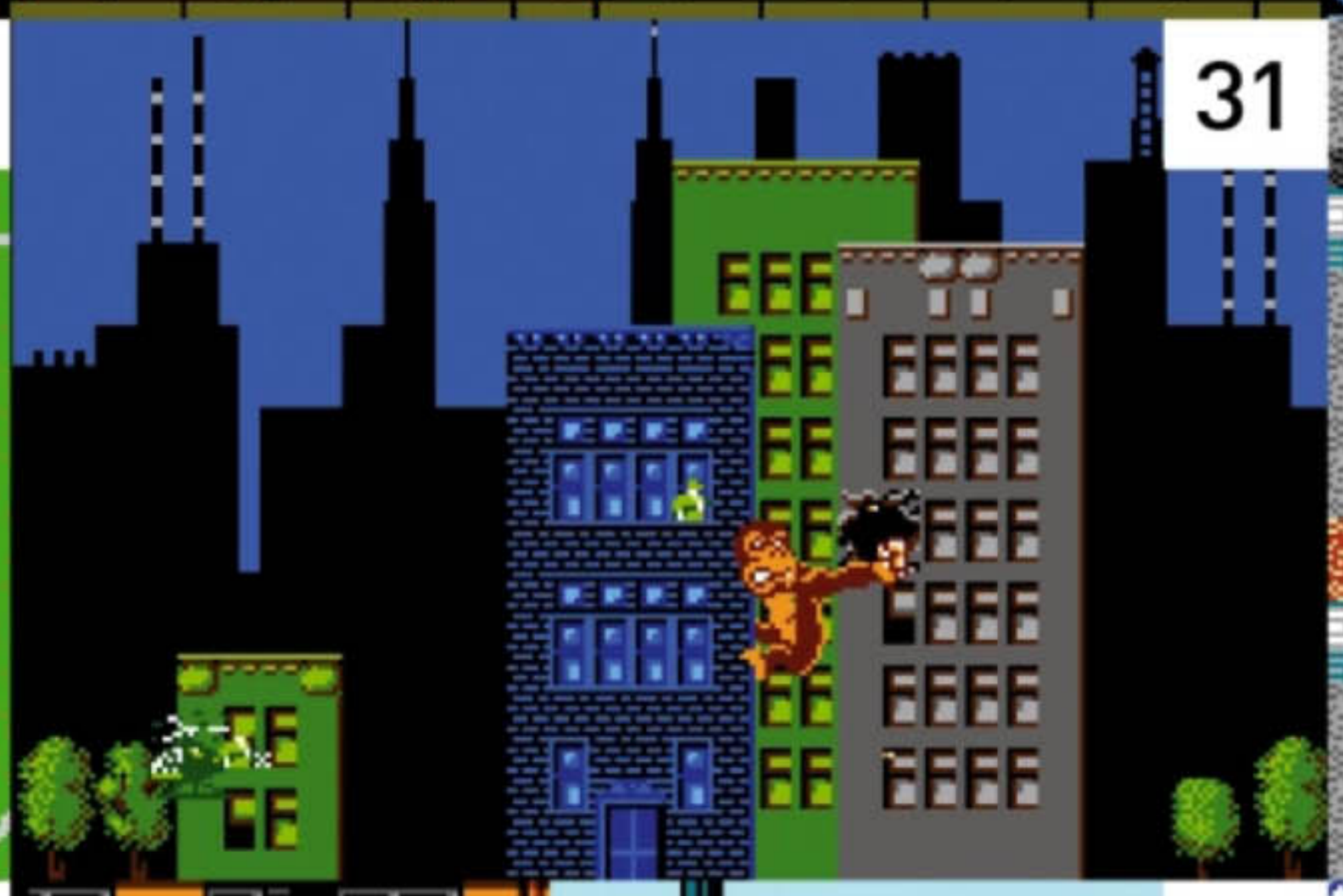

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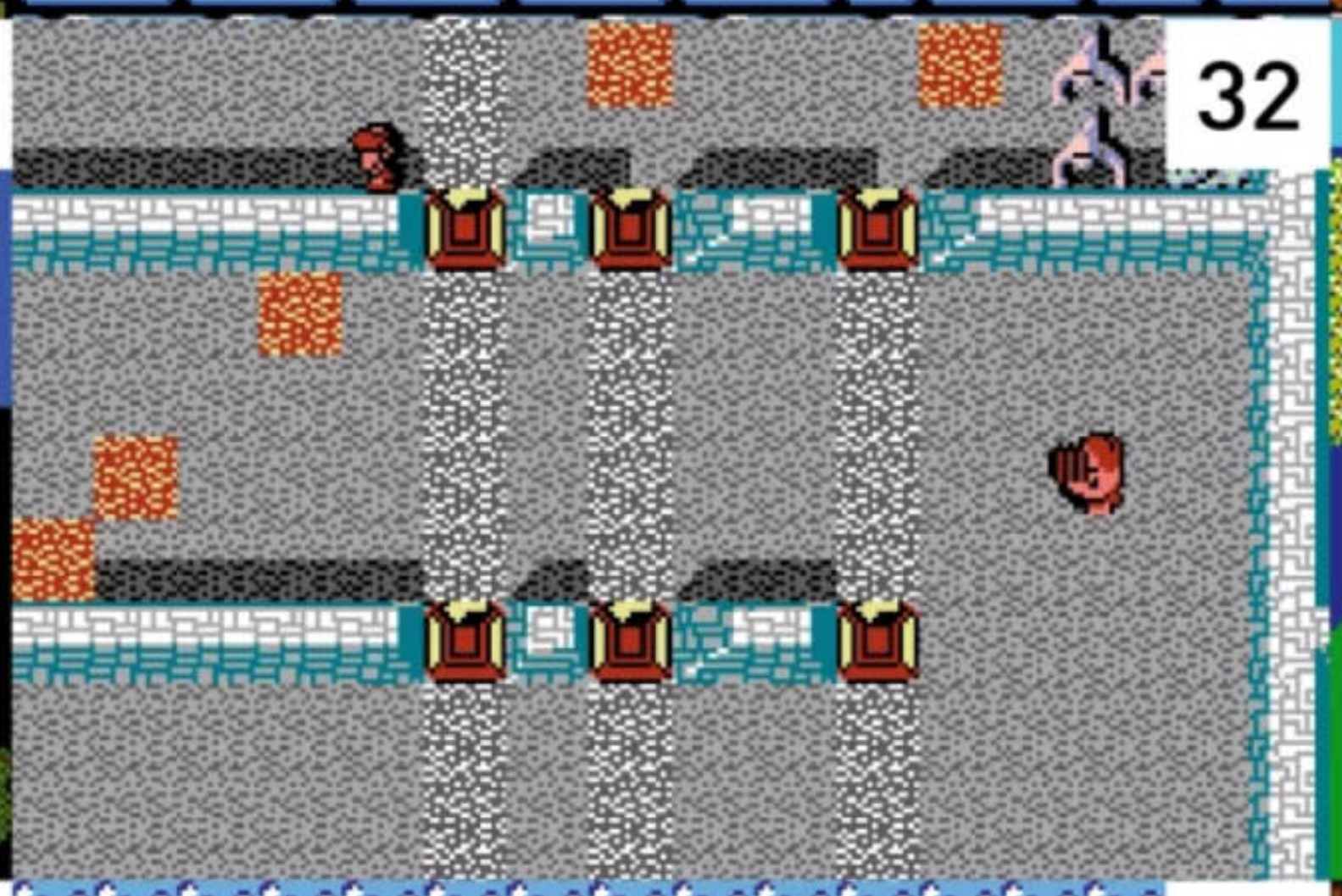

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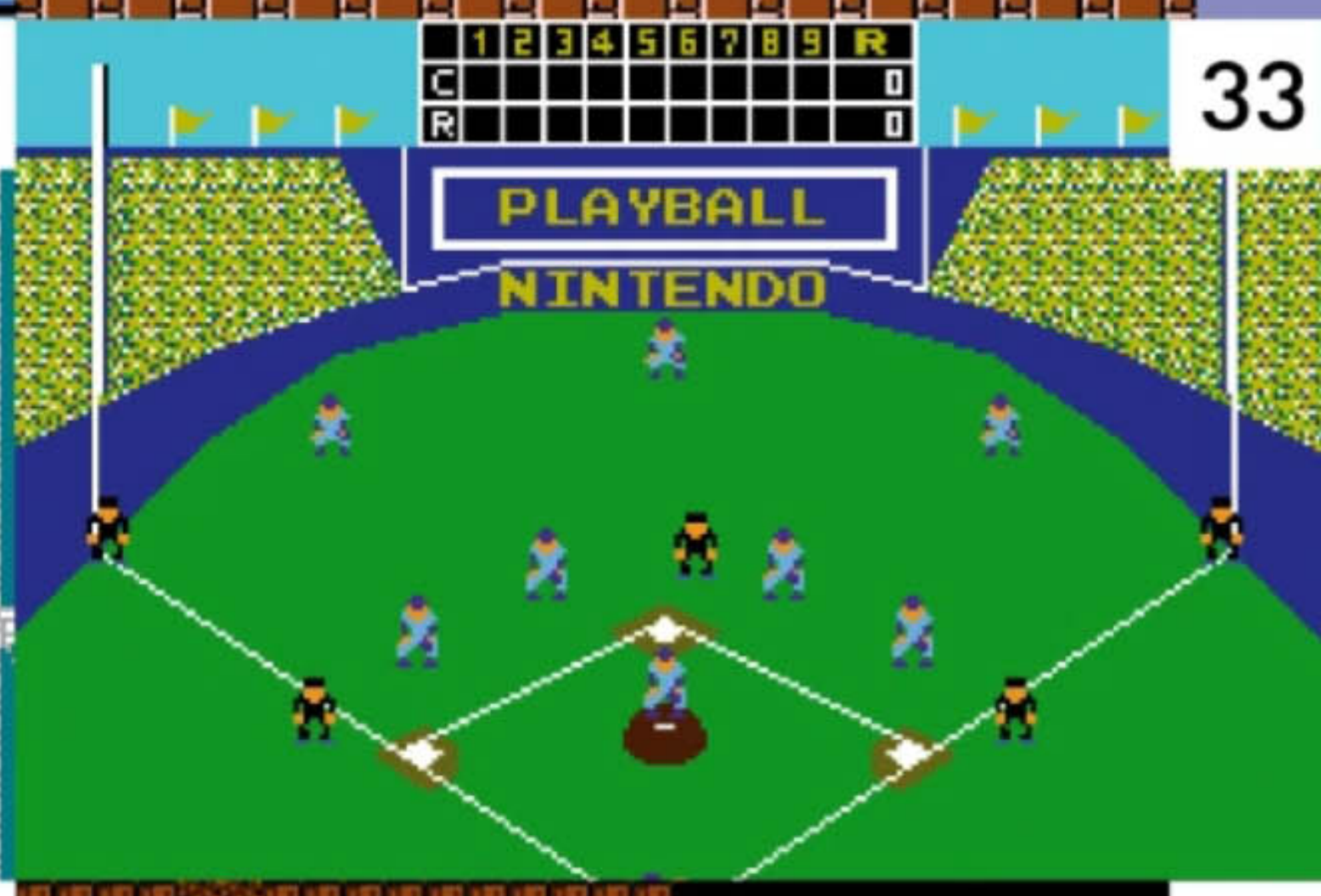
PLAYBALL
NINTENDO

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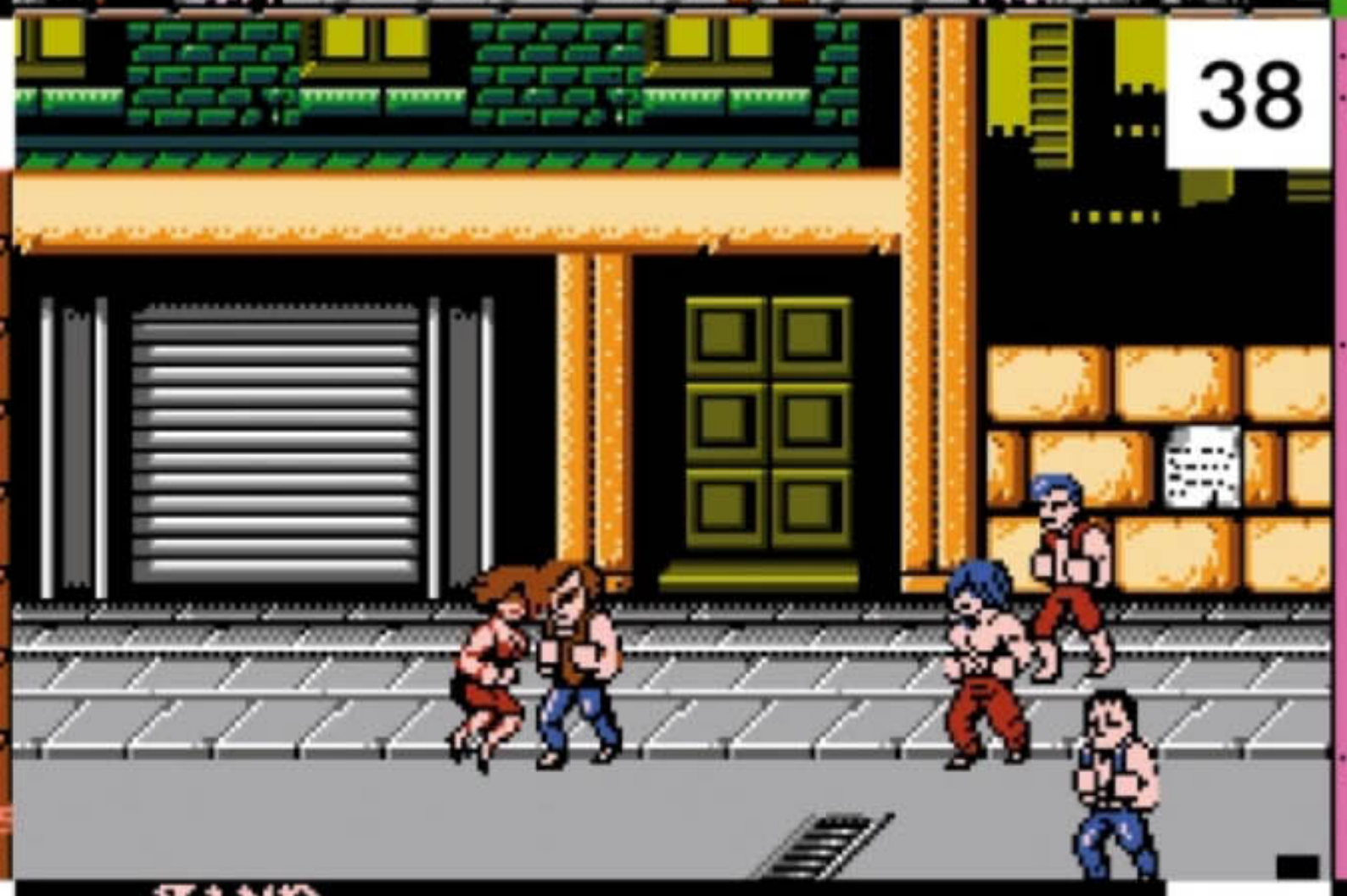

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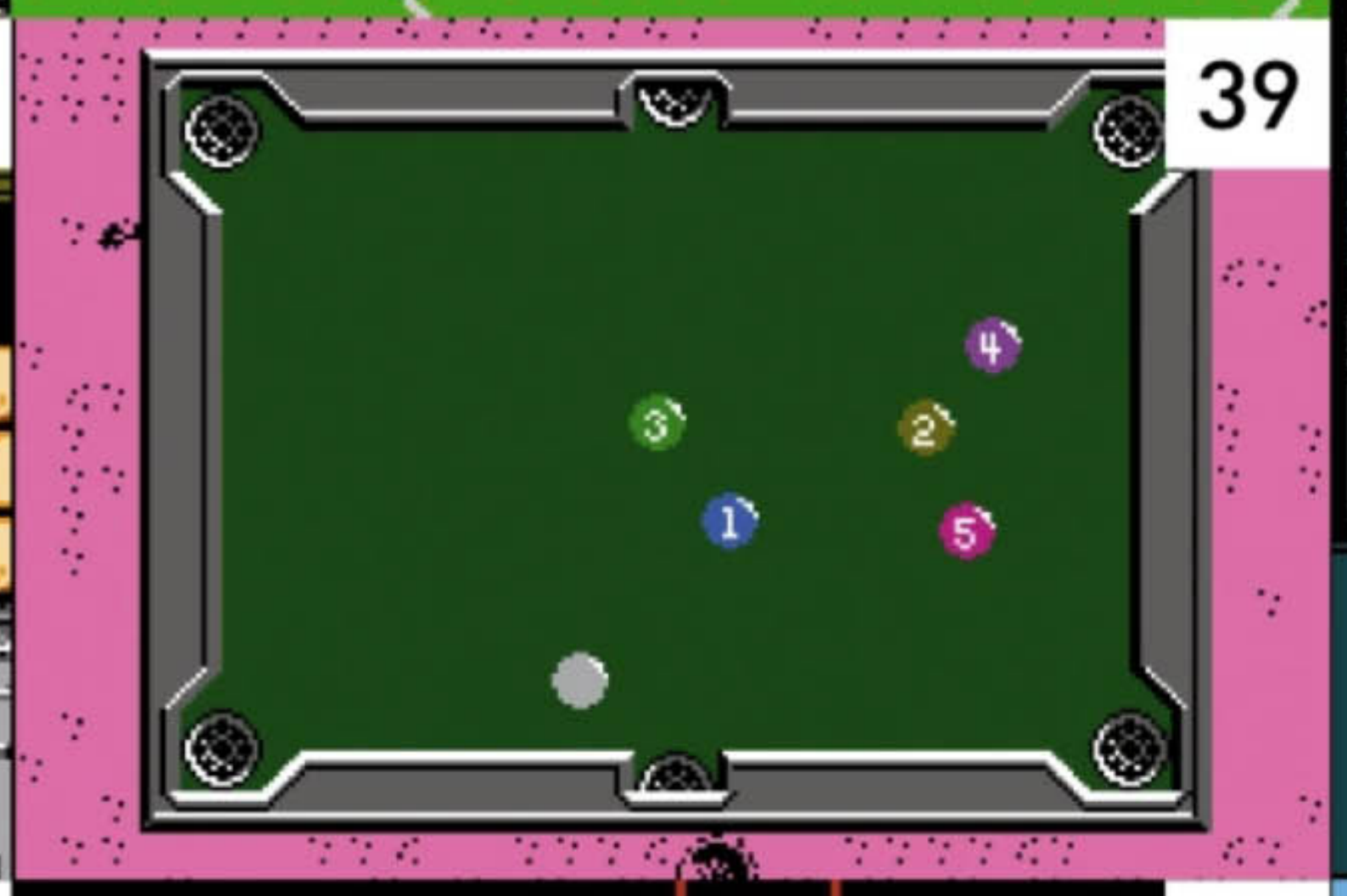

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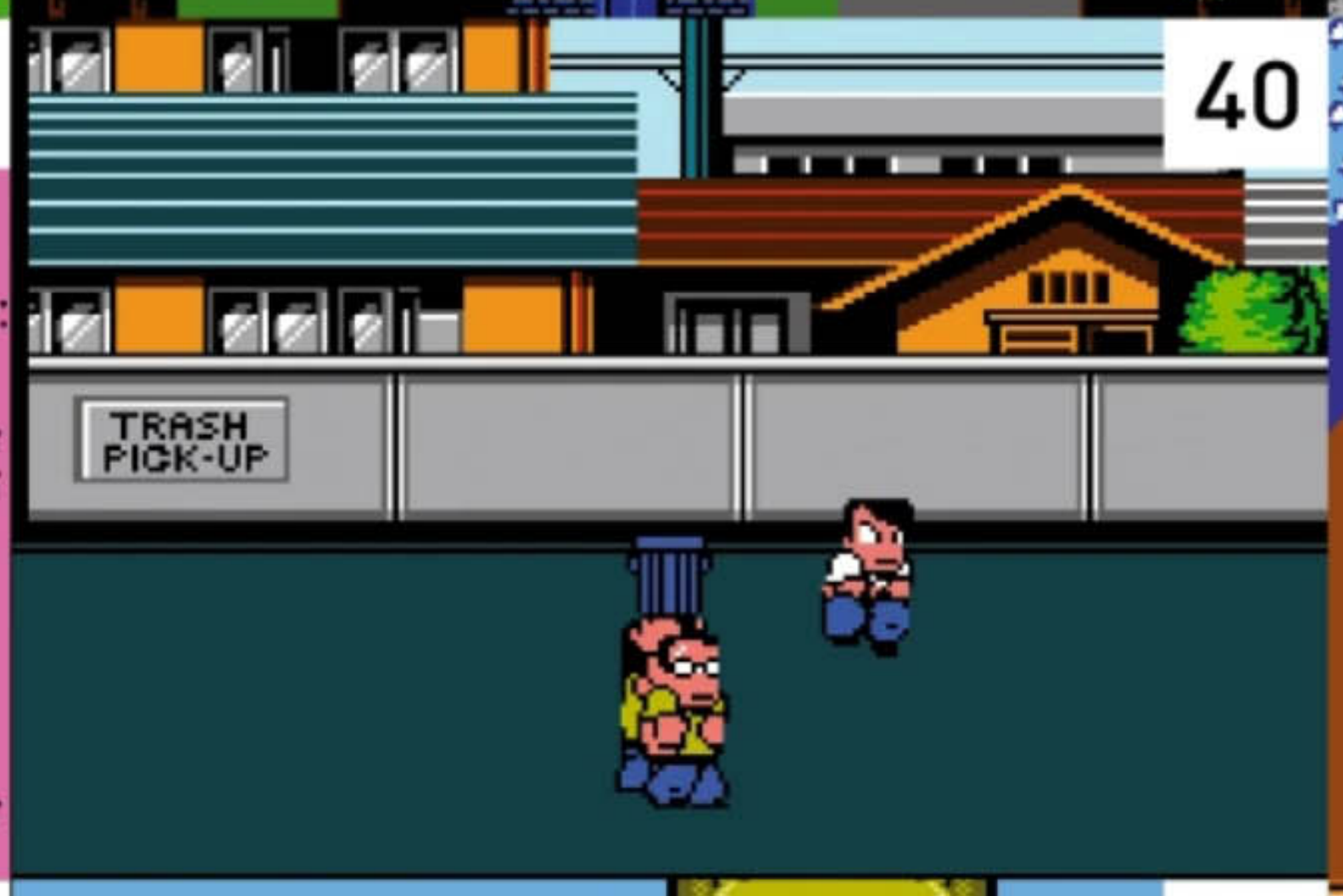
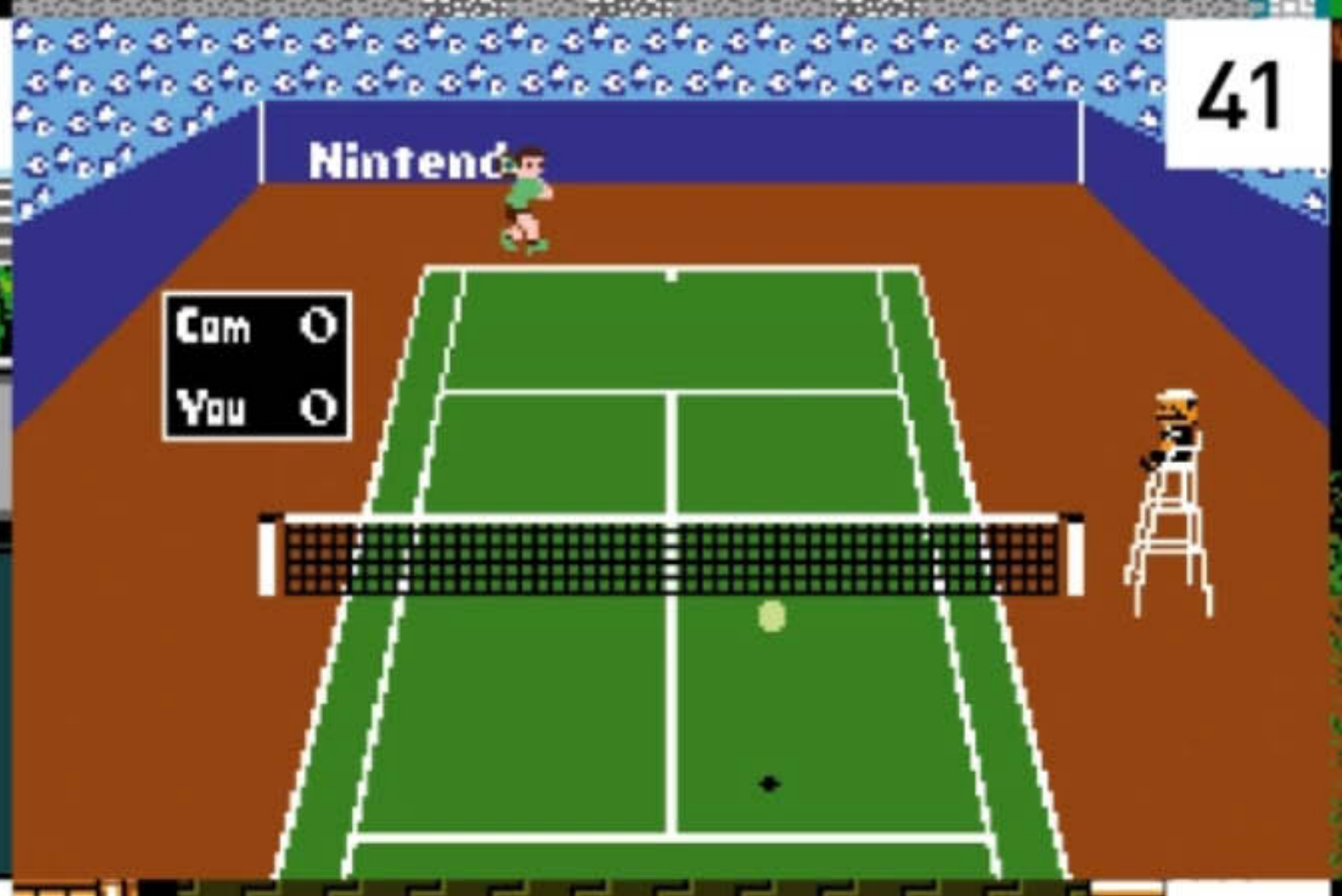
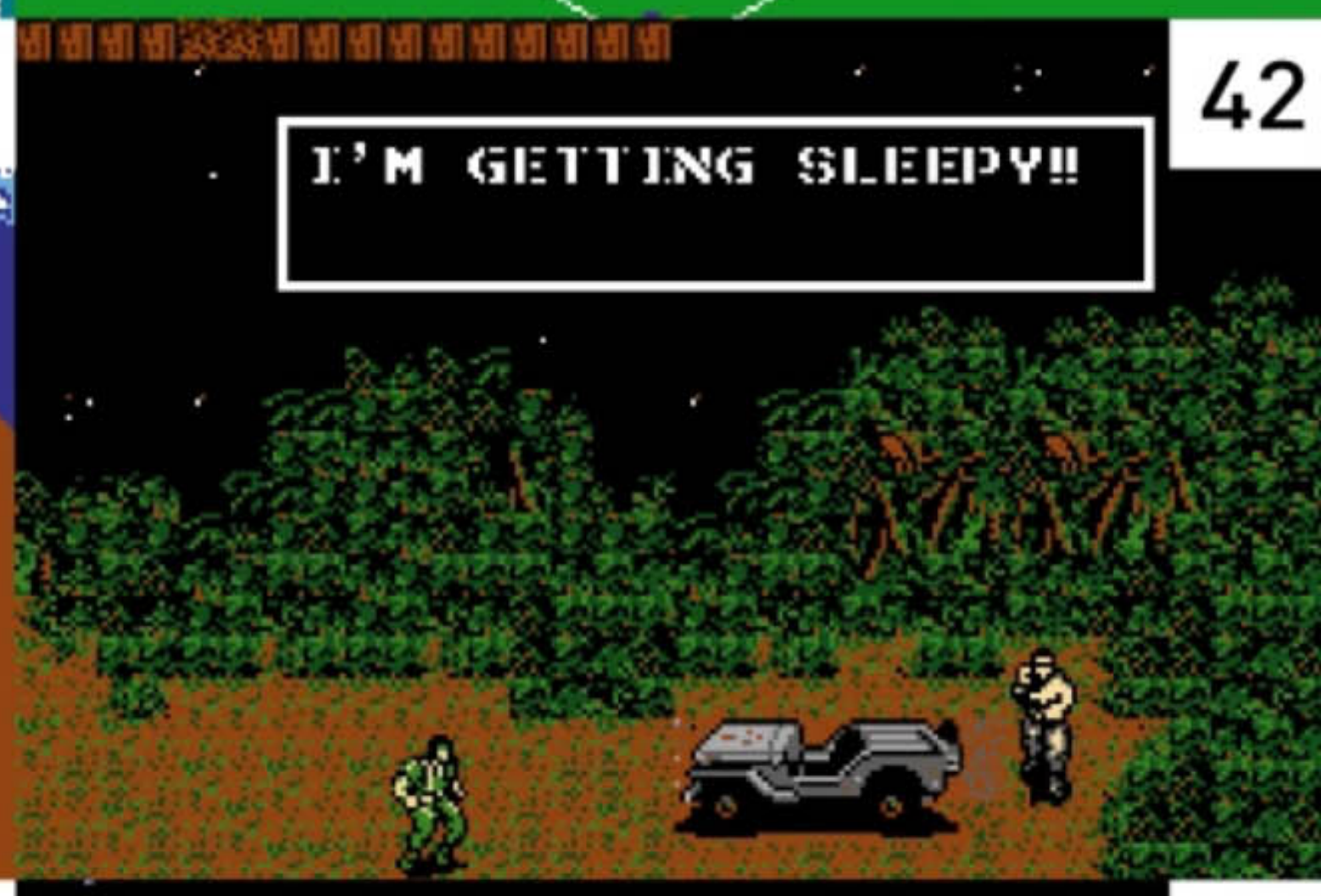

TRASH
PICK-UP

41


Nintendo
Com 0
You 0

42


I'M GETTING SLEEPY!!

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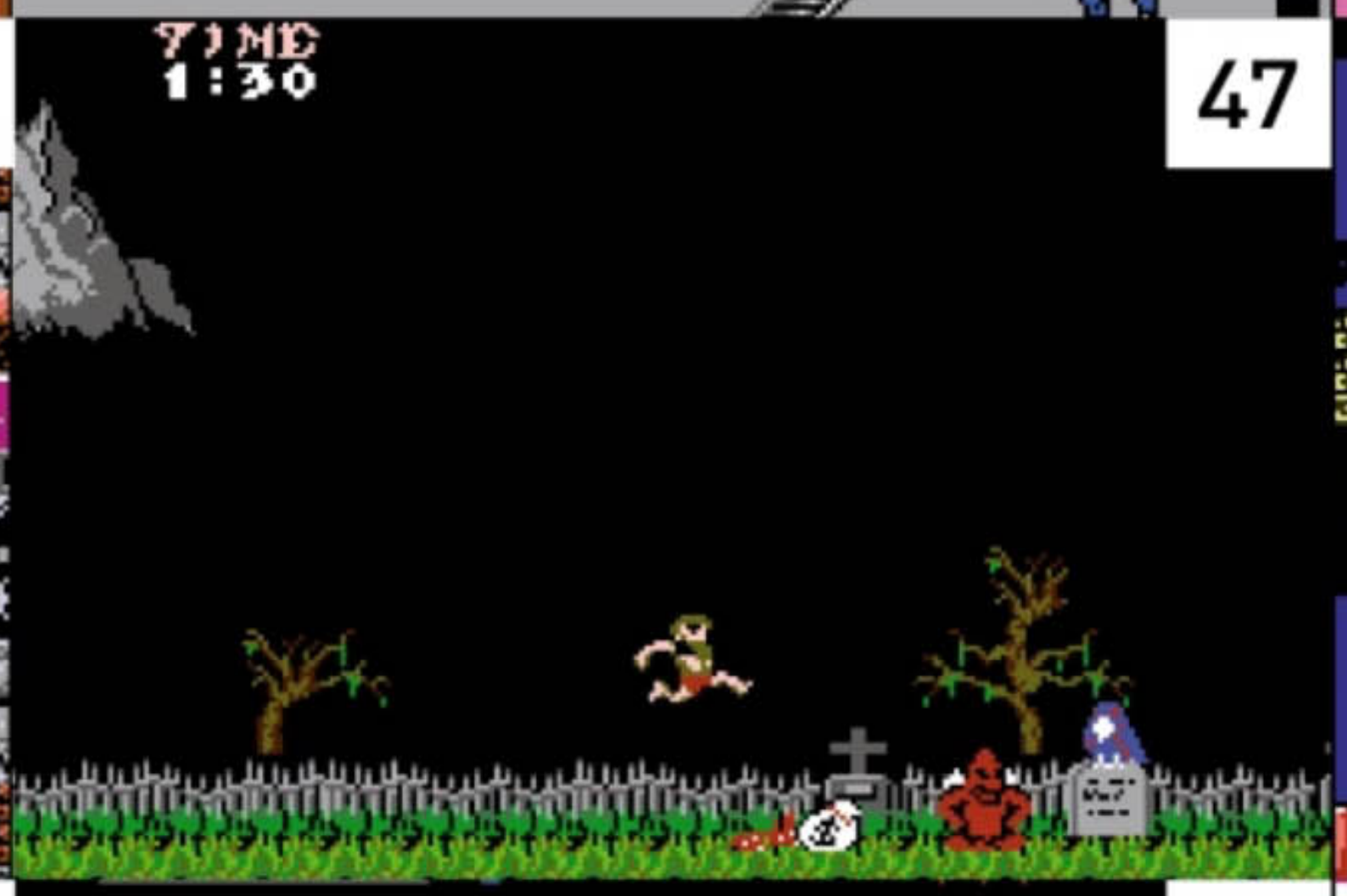

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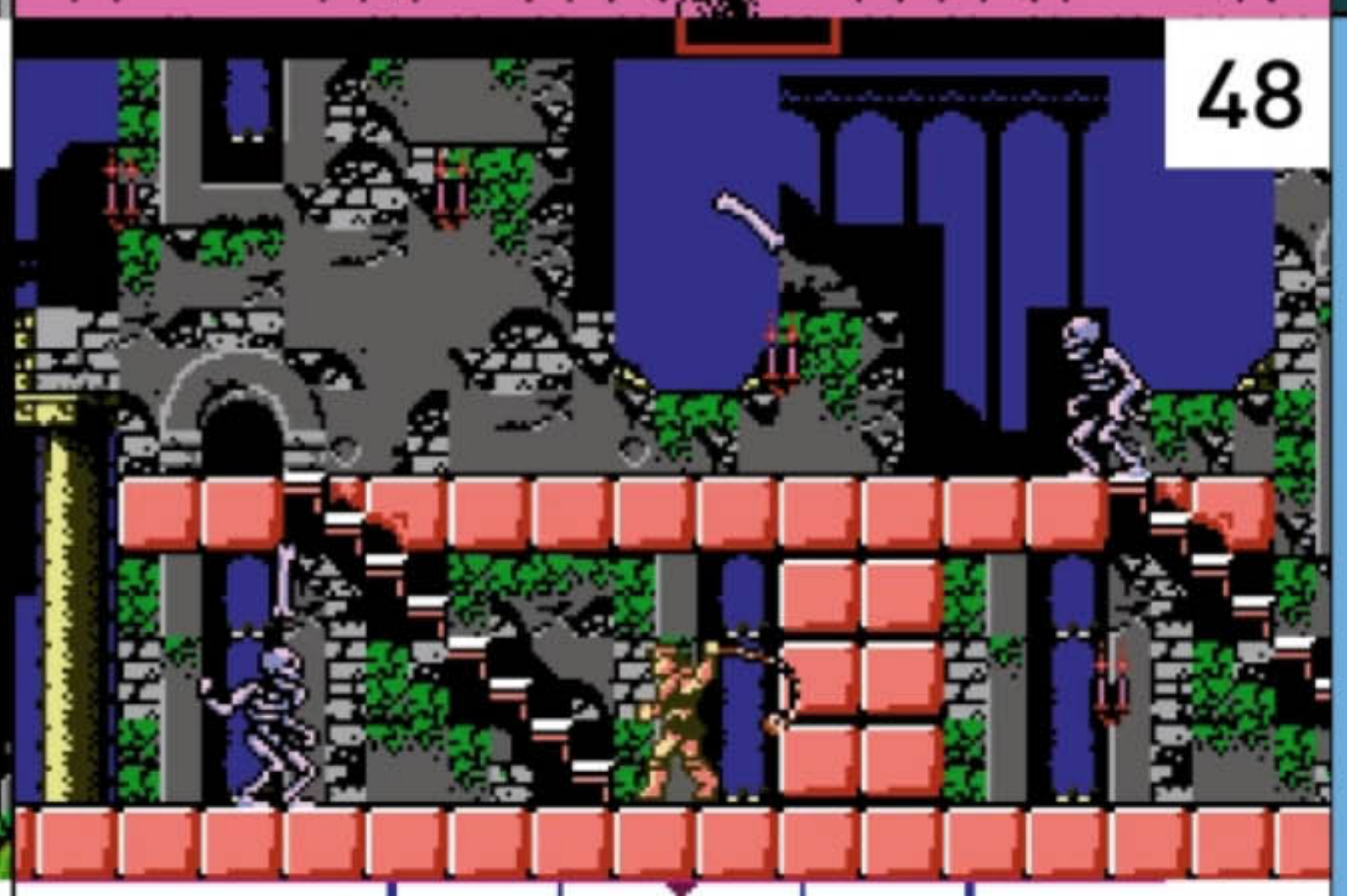

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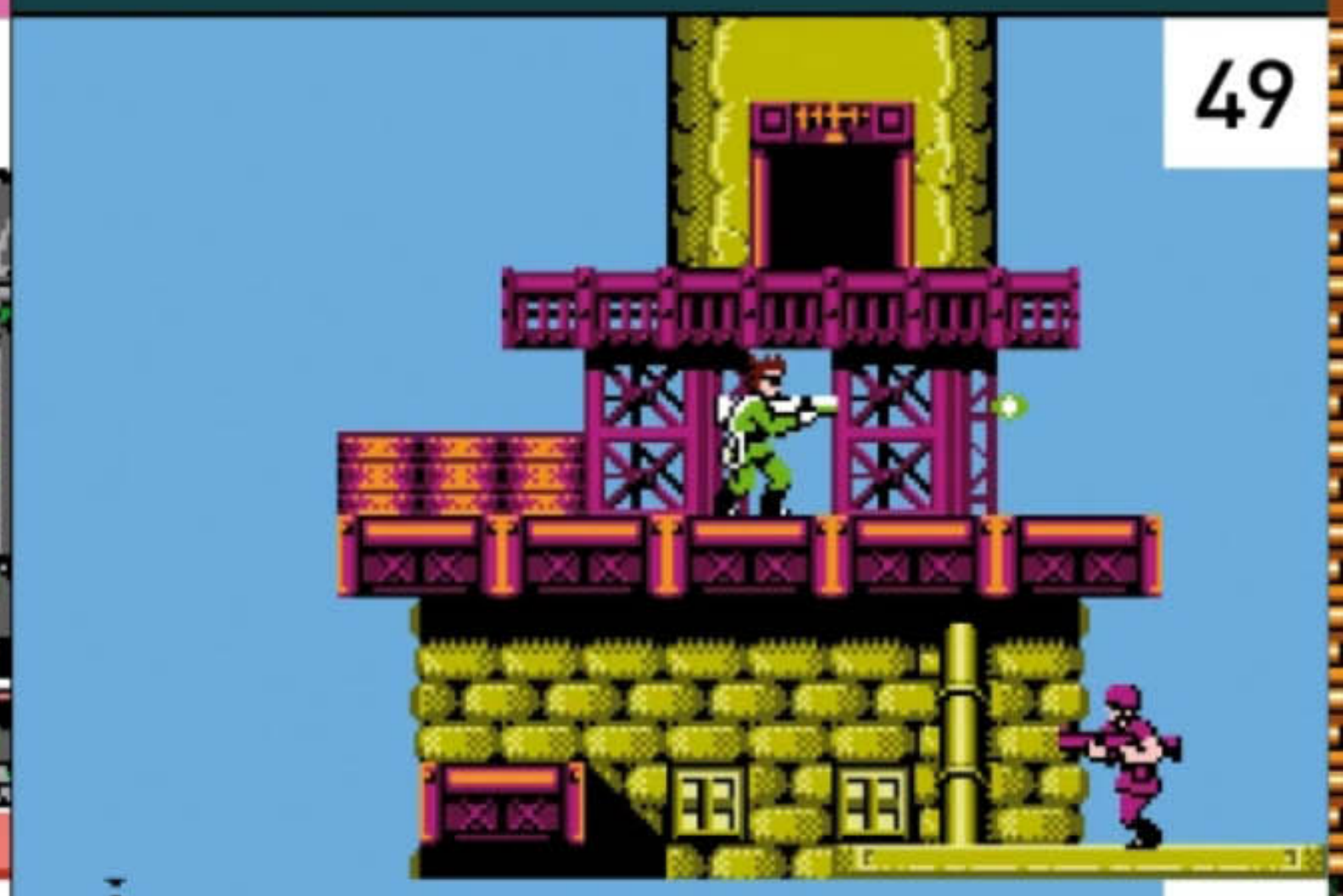

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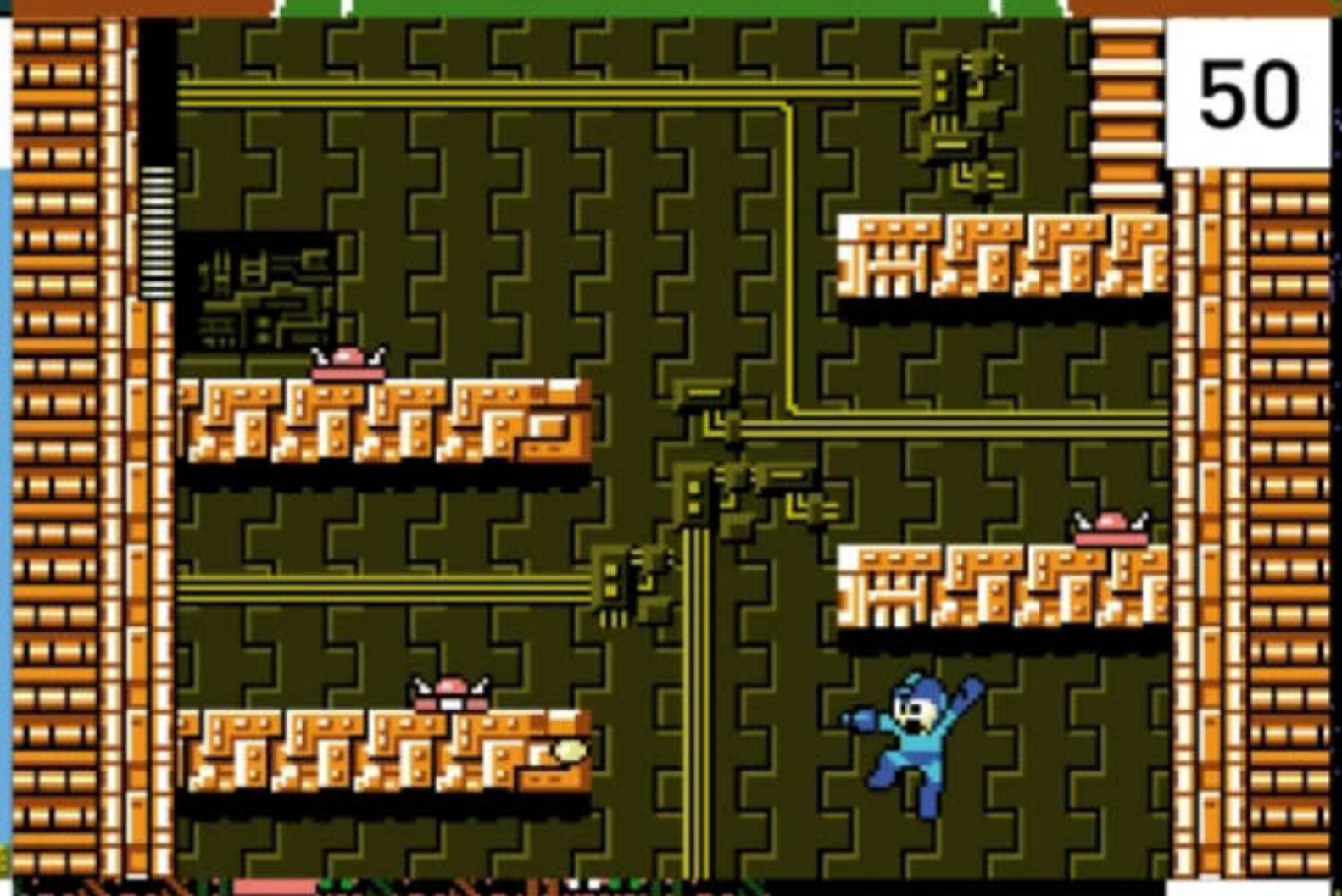

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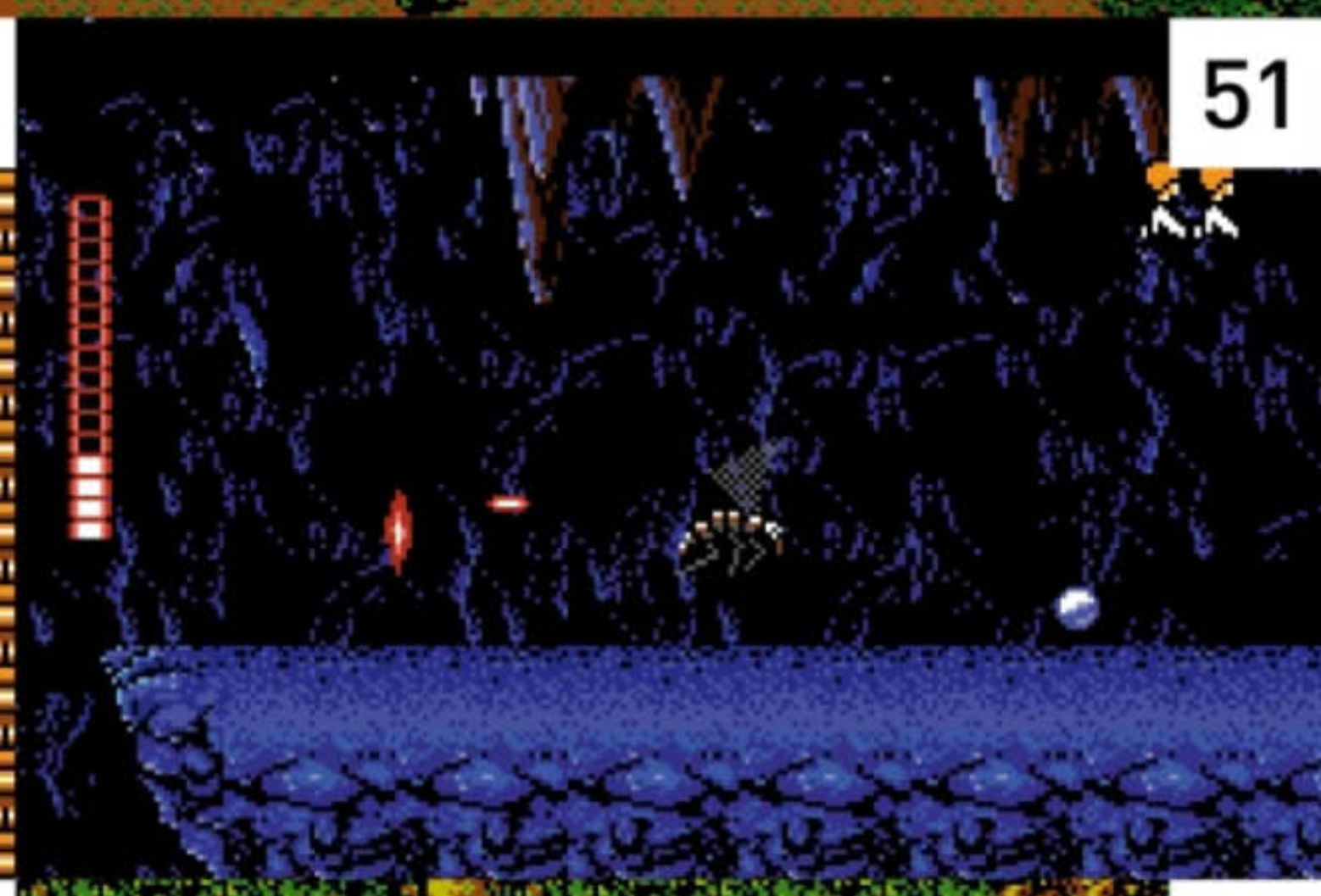

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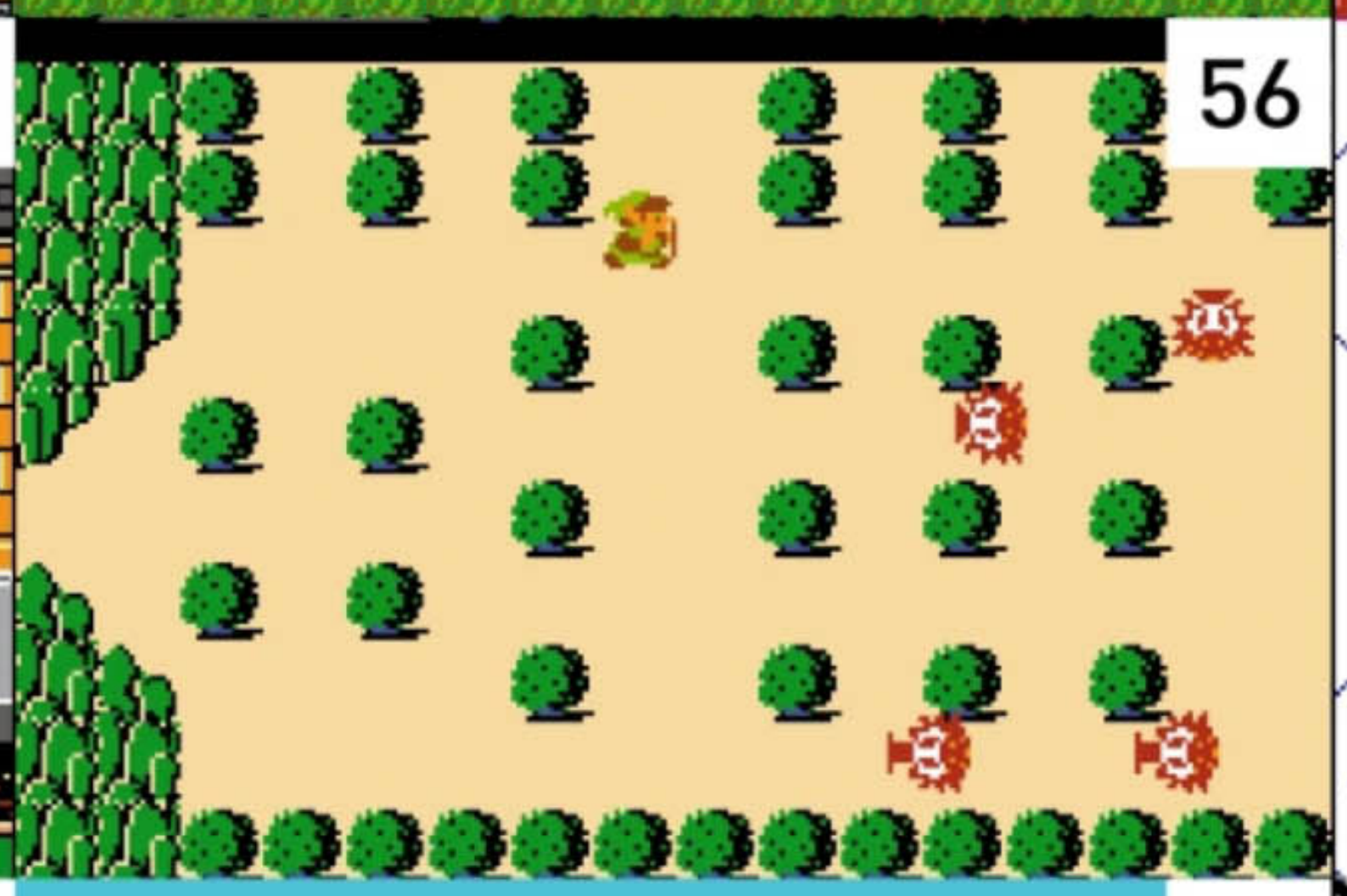

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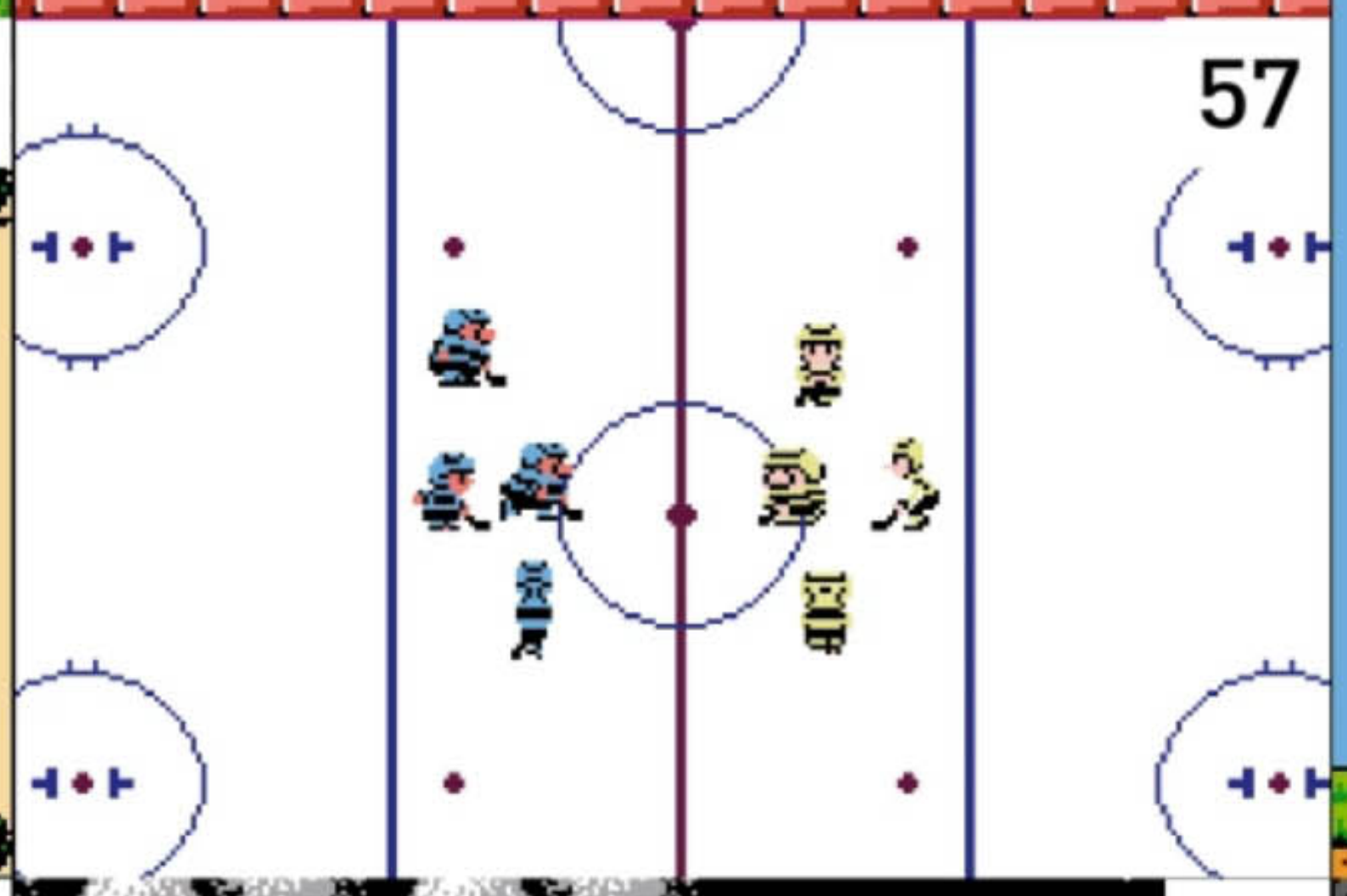

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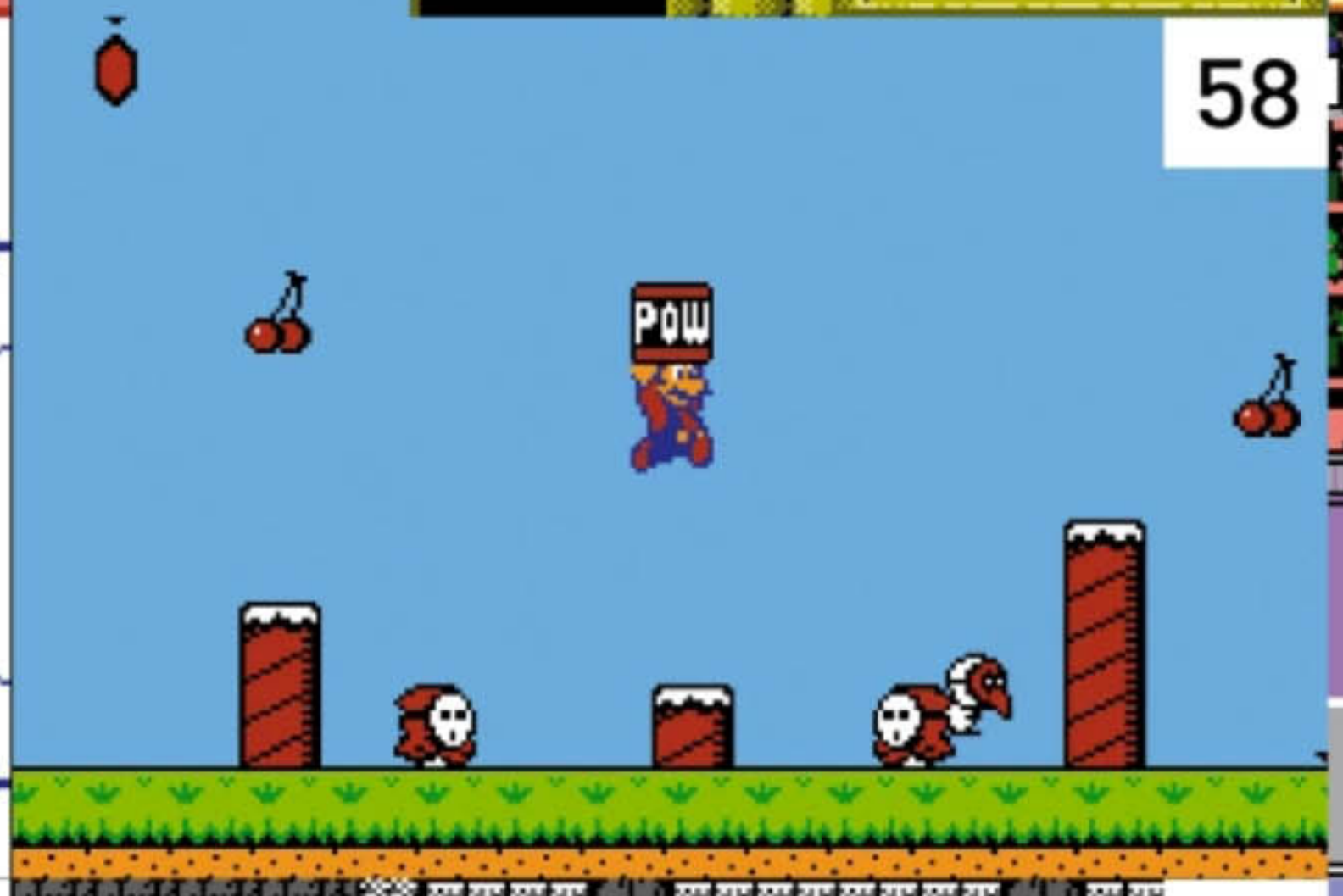

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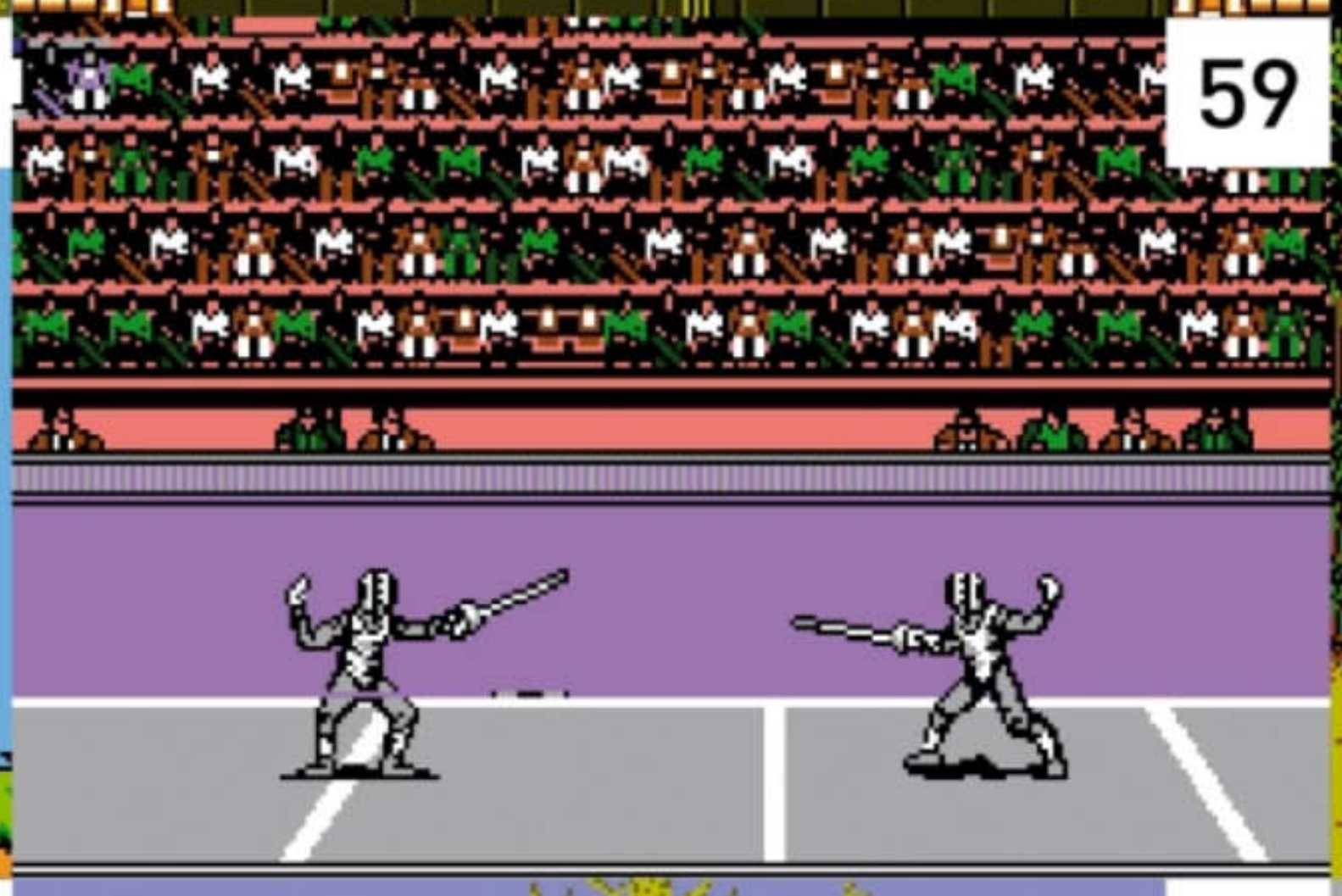

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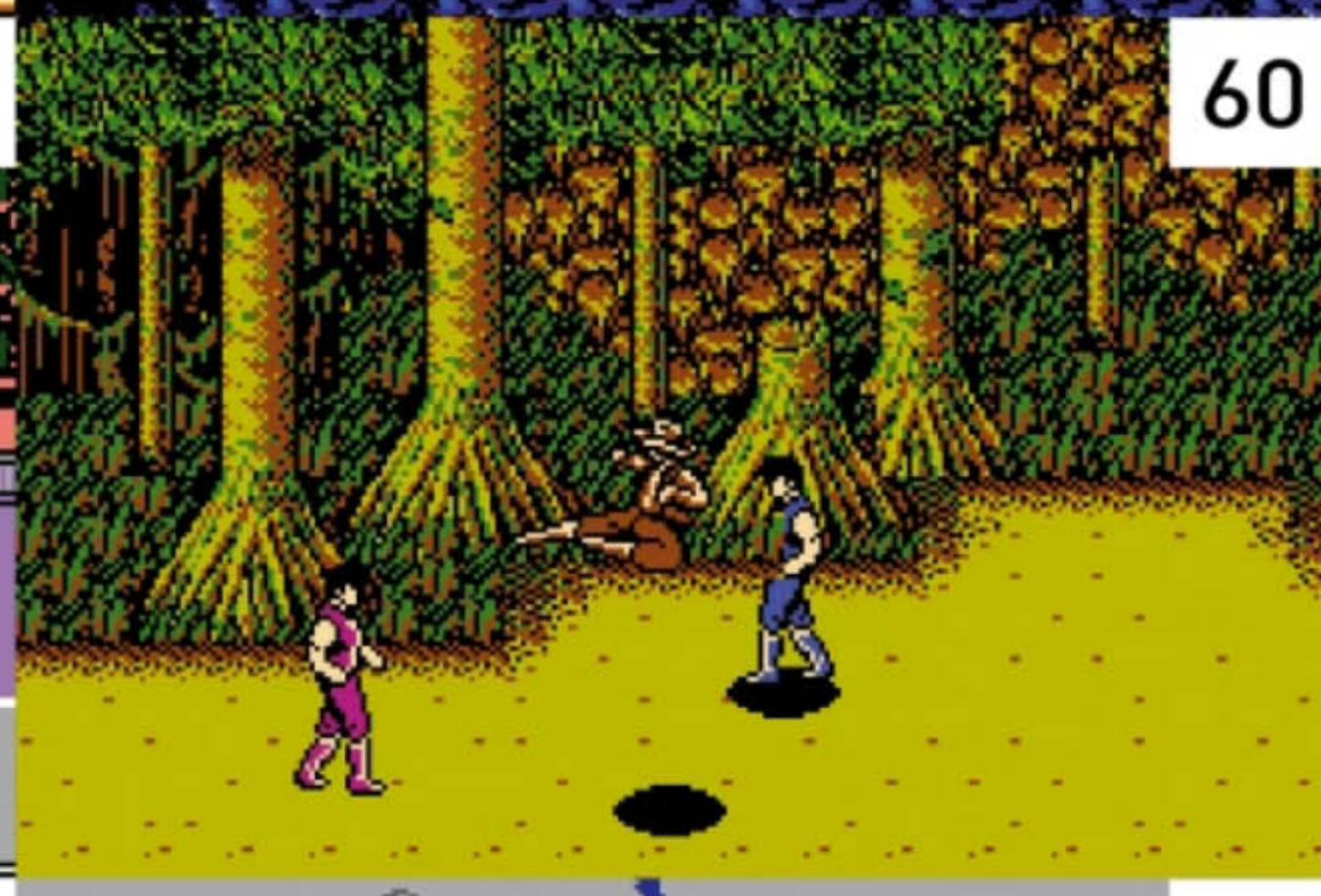

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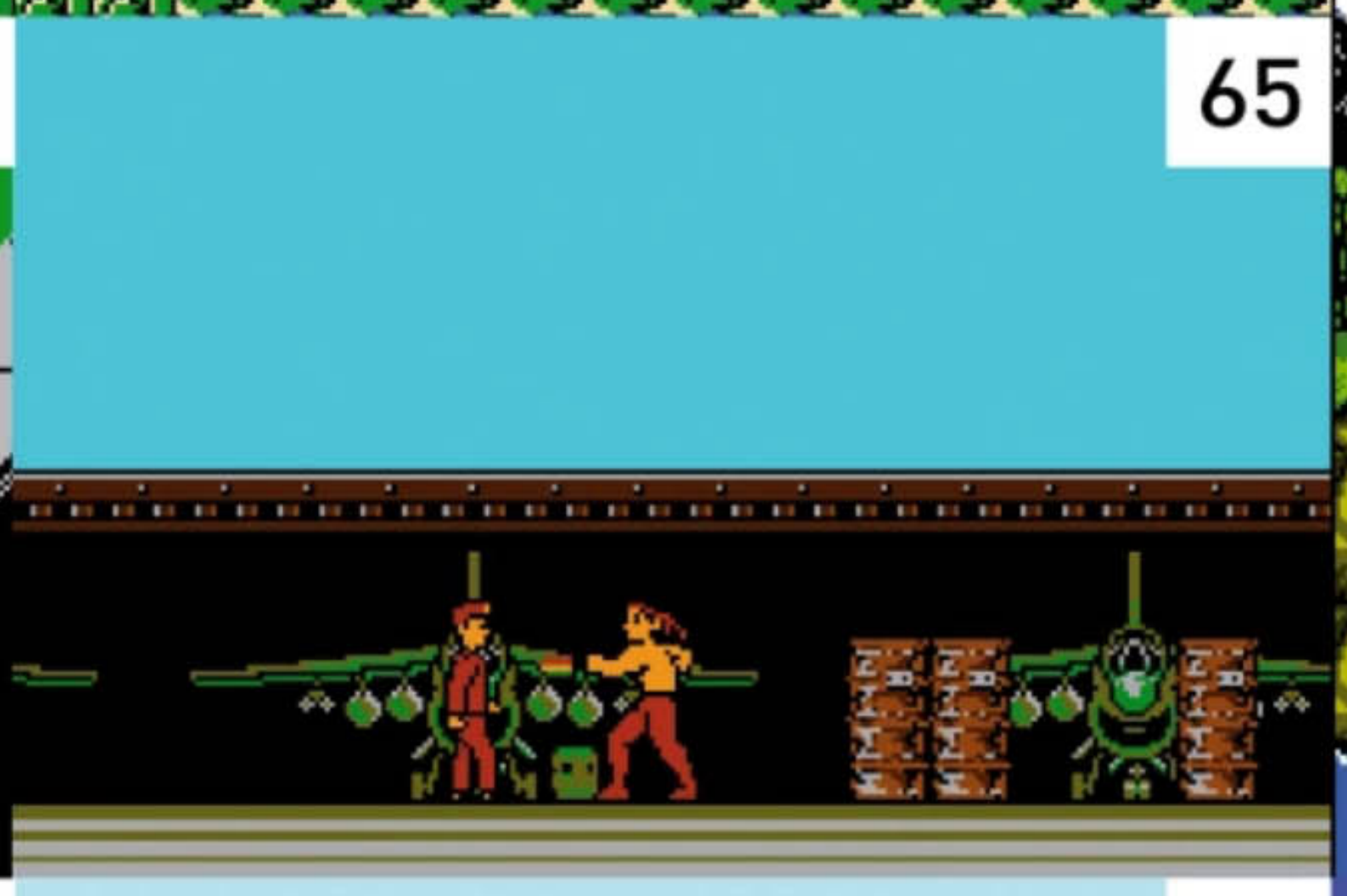

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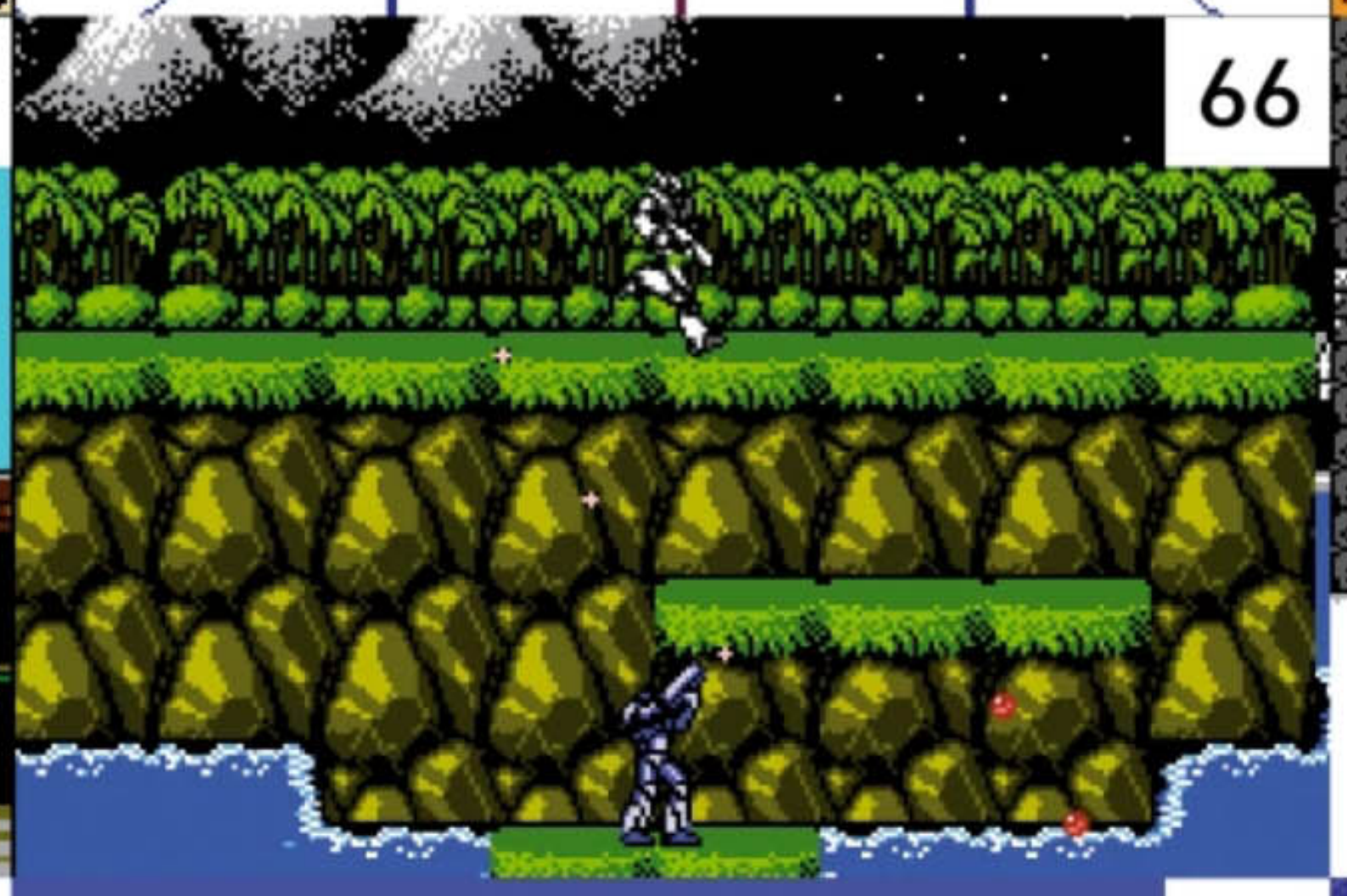

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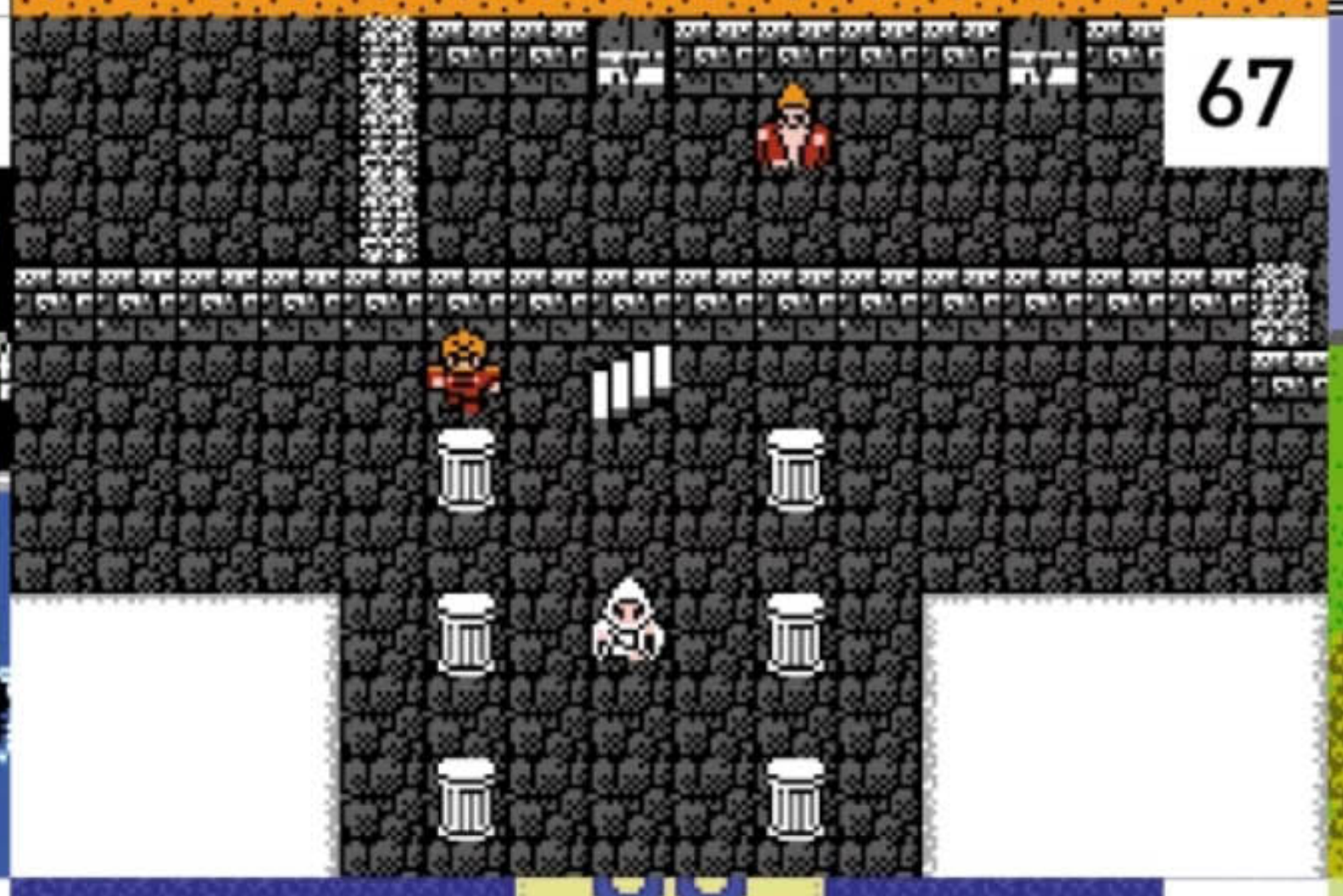

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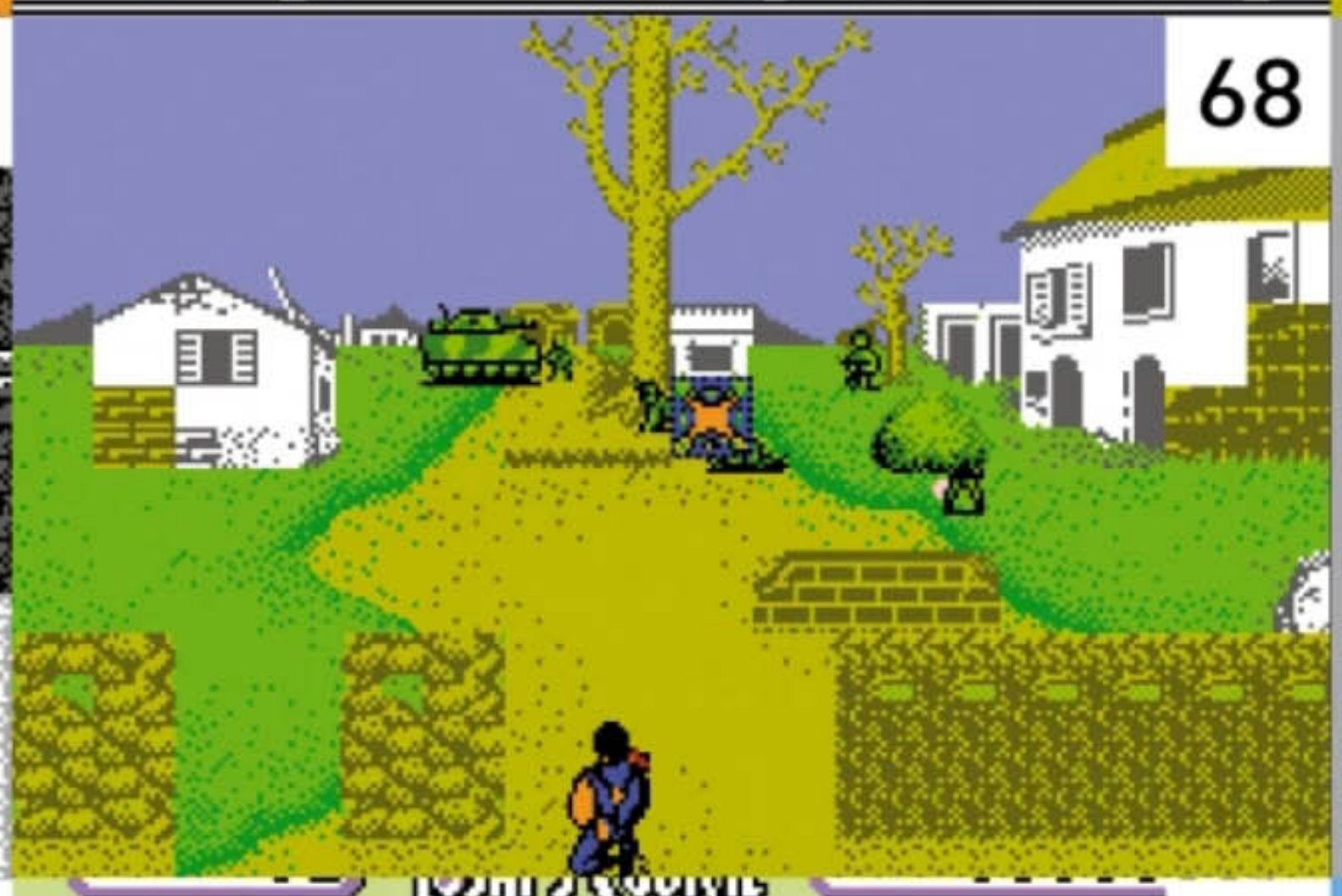

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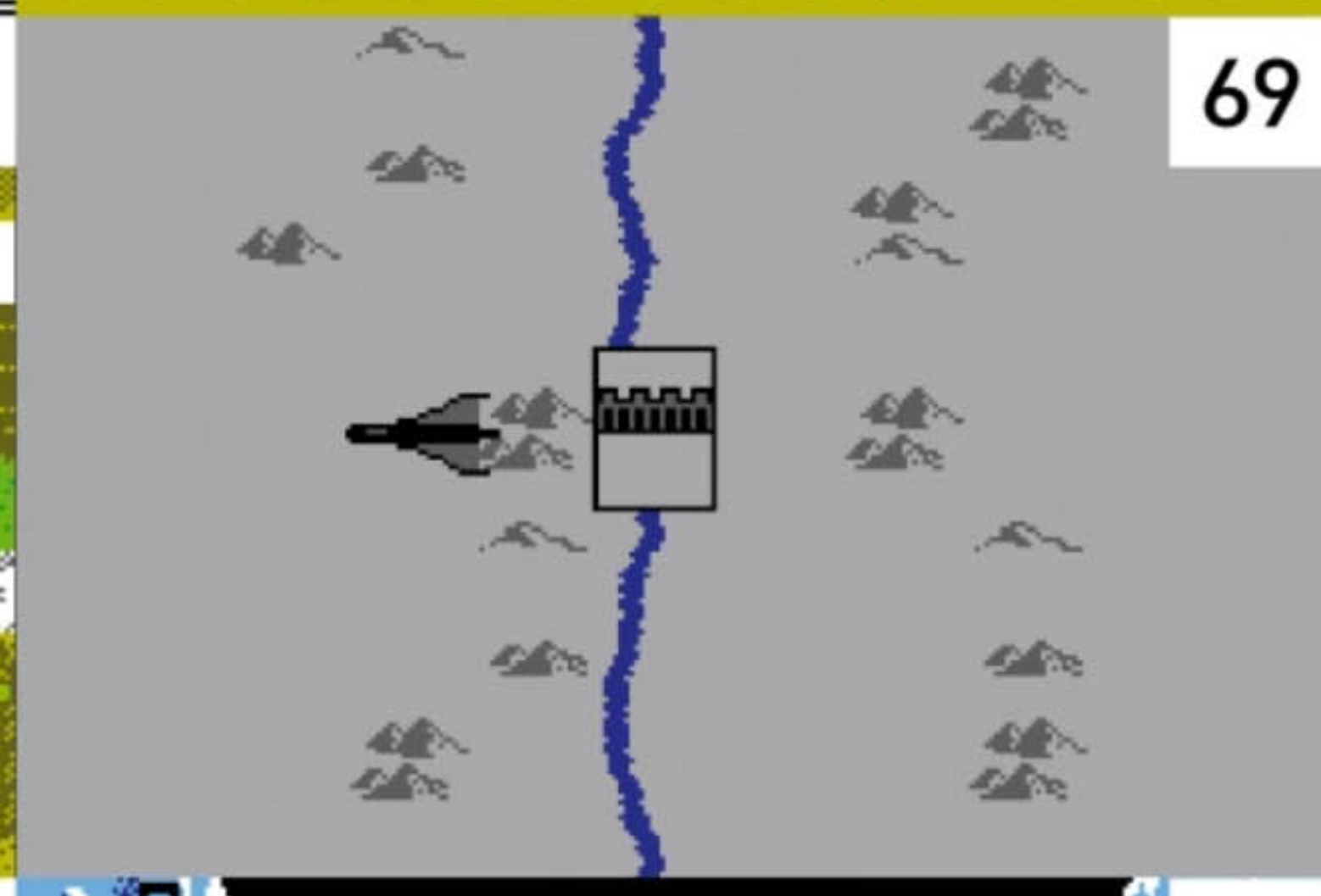

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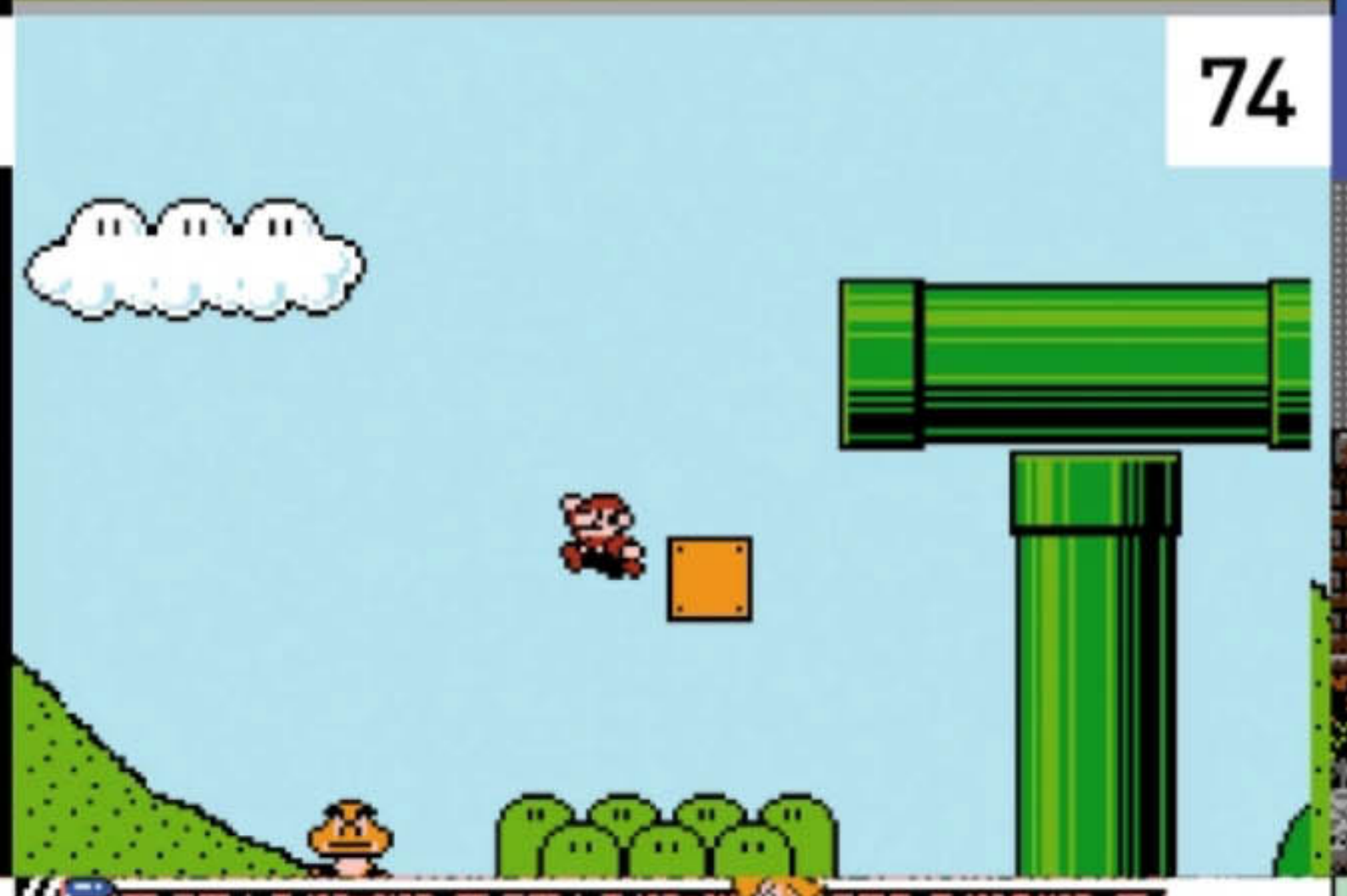

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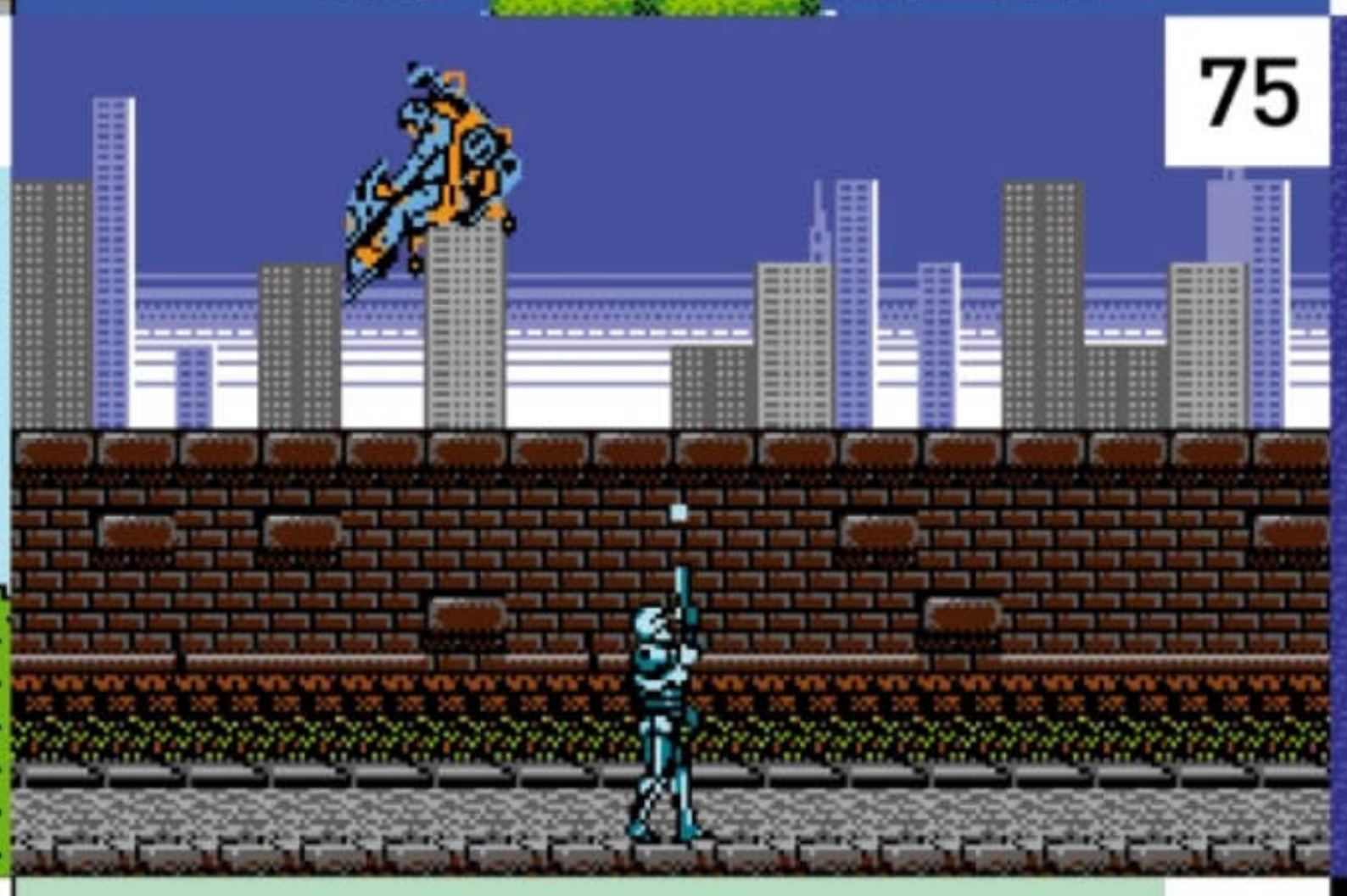

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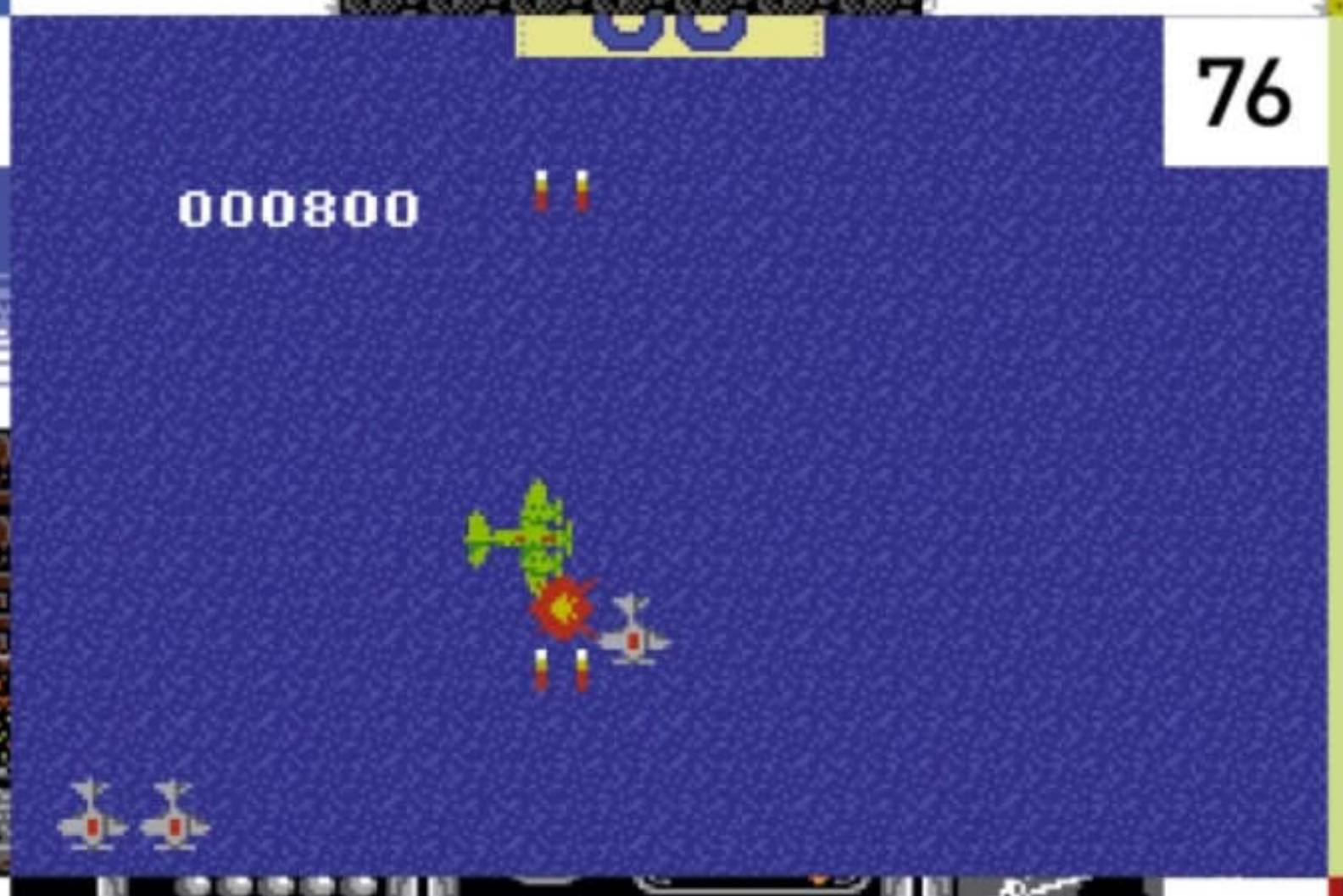

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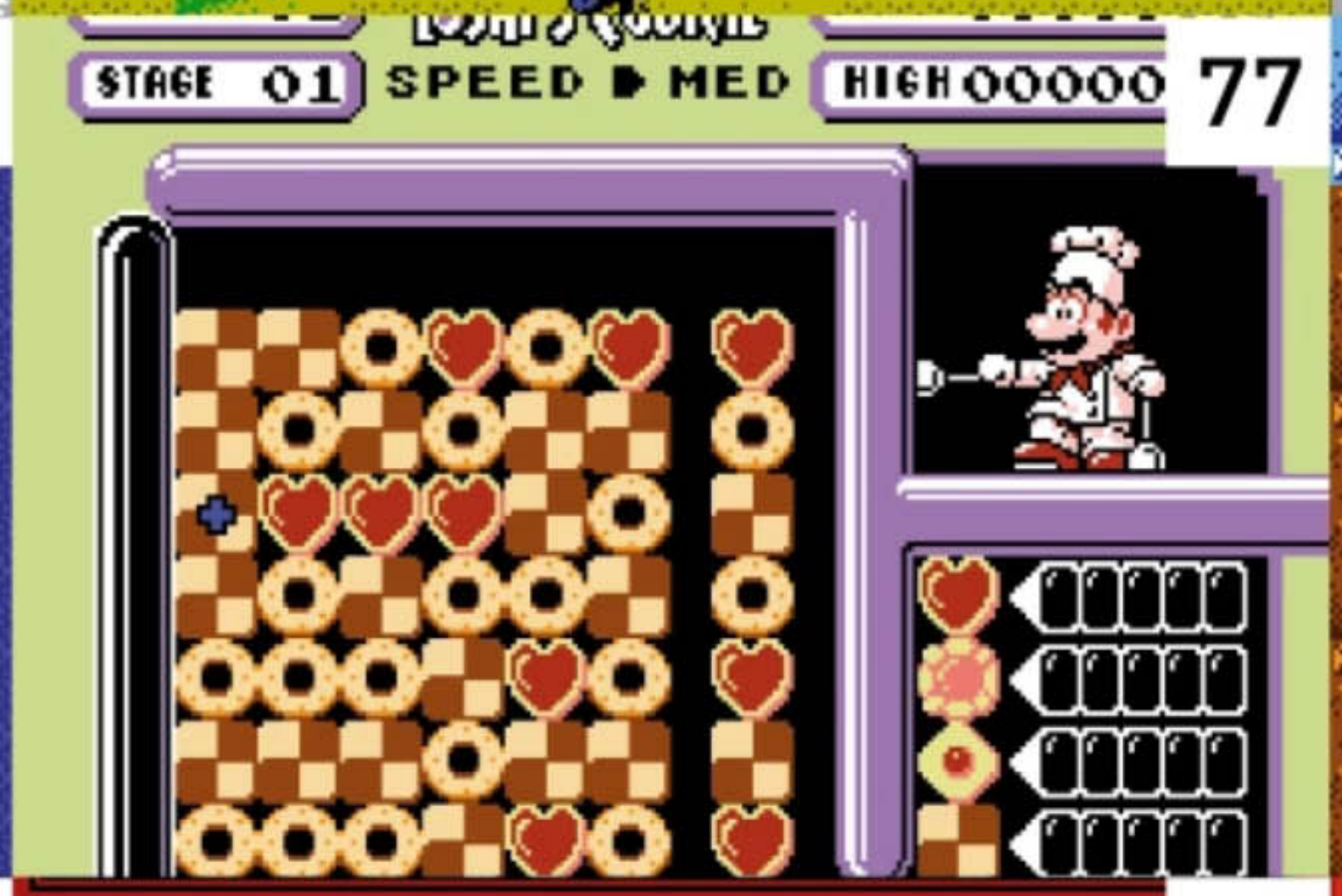
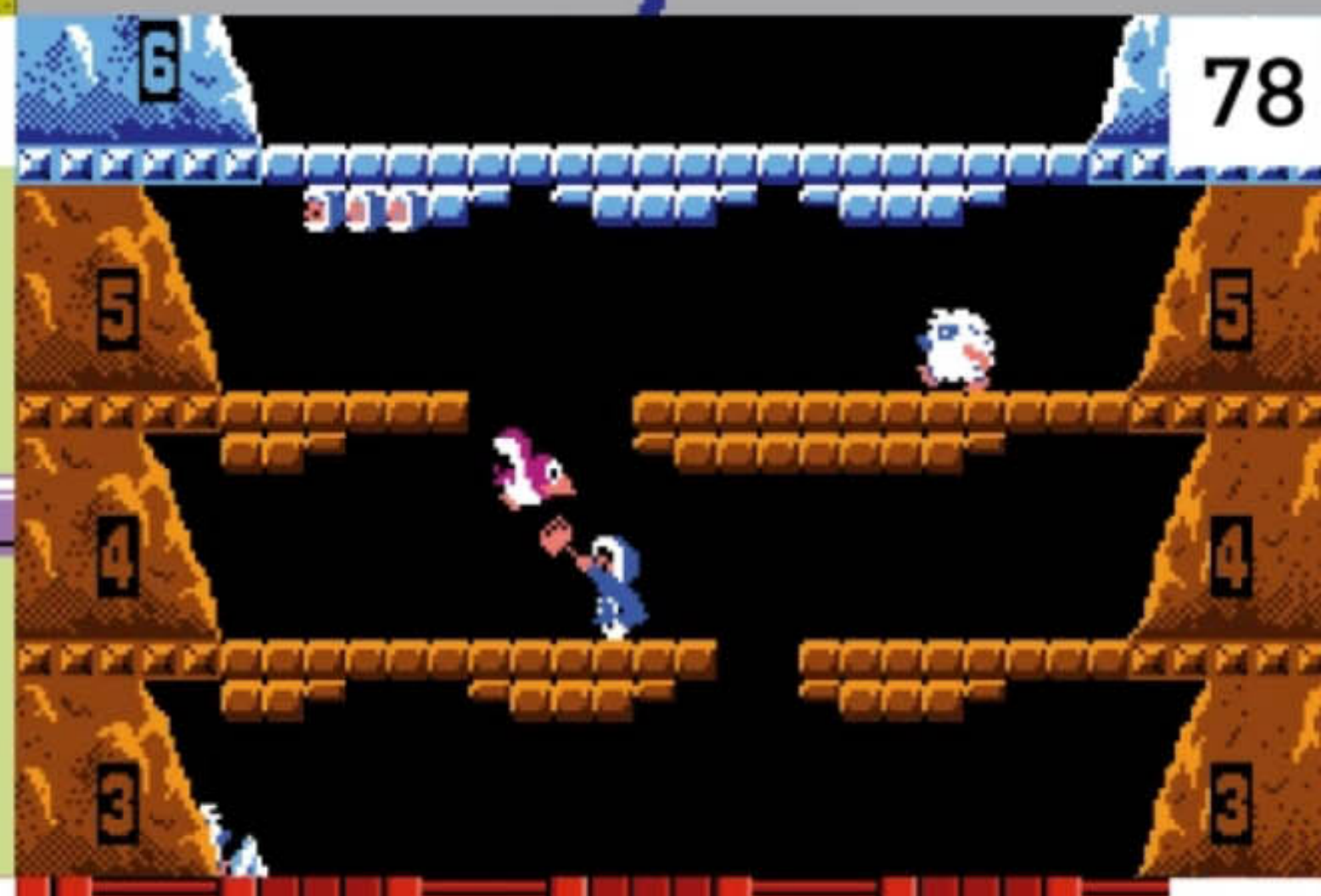

STAGE 01
SPEED MED
HIGH 00000

78



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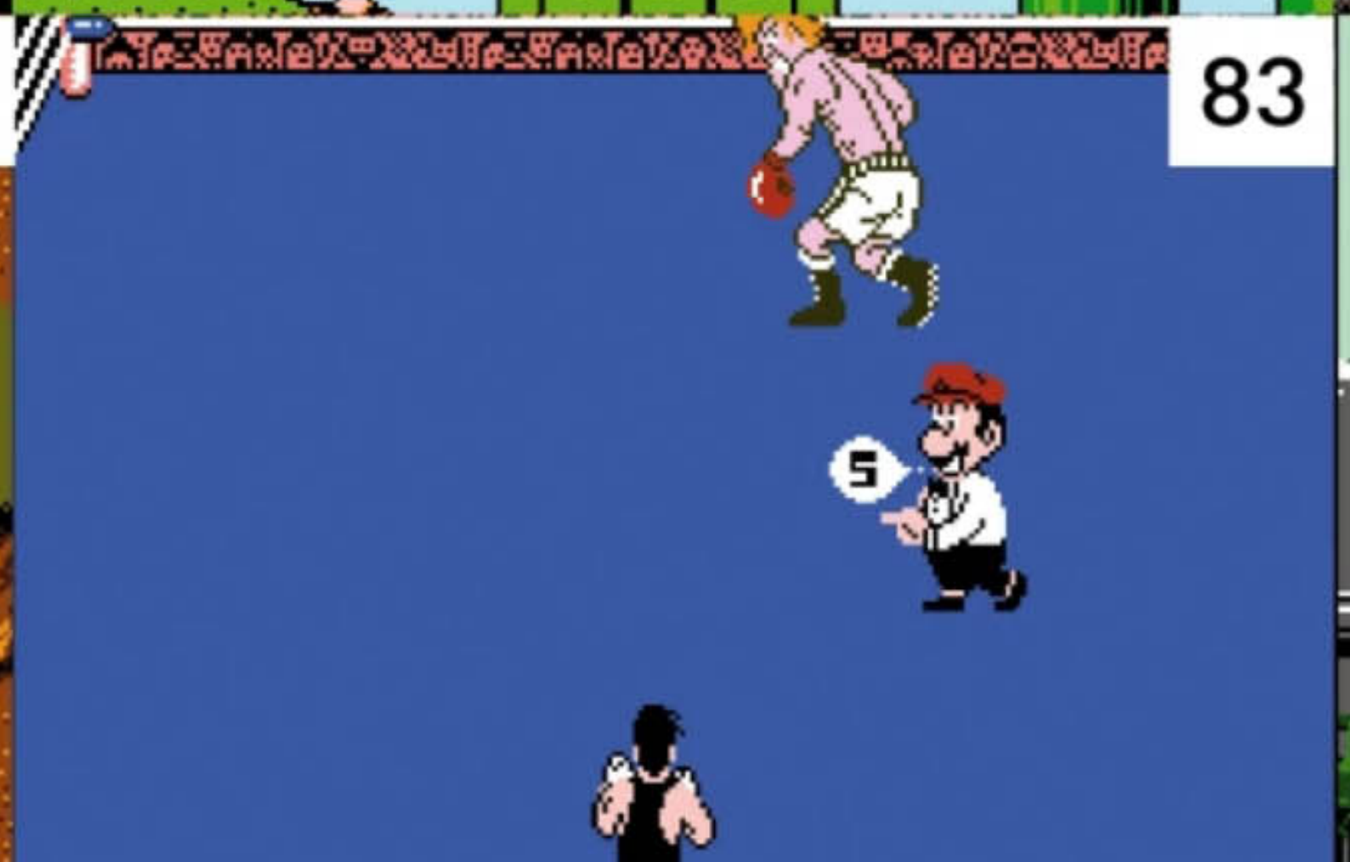

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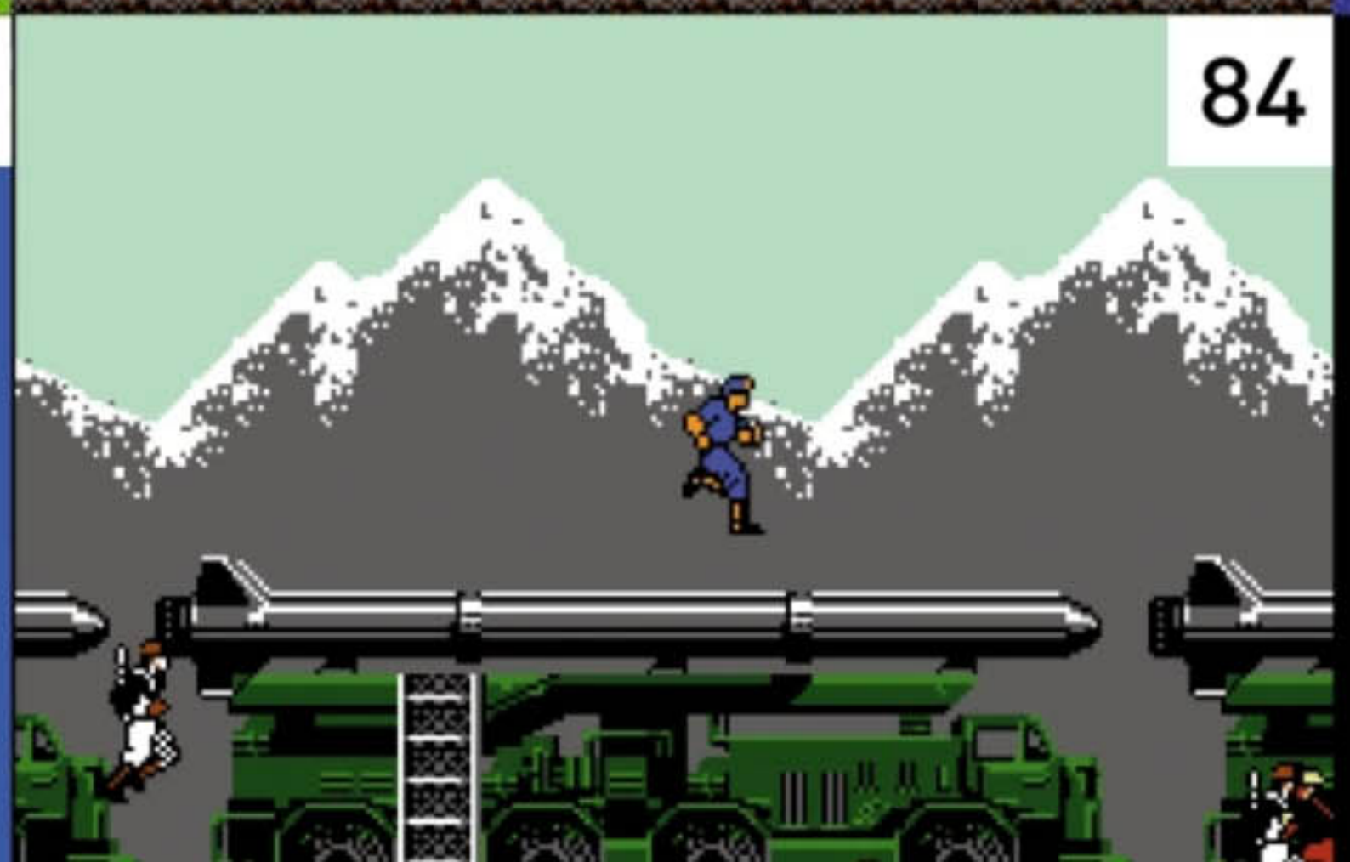

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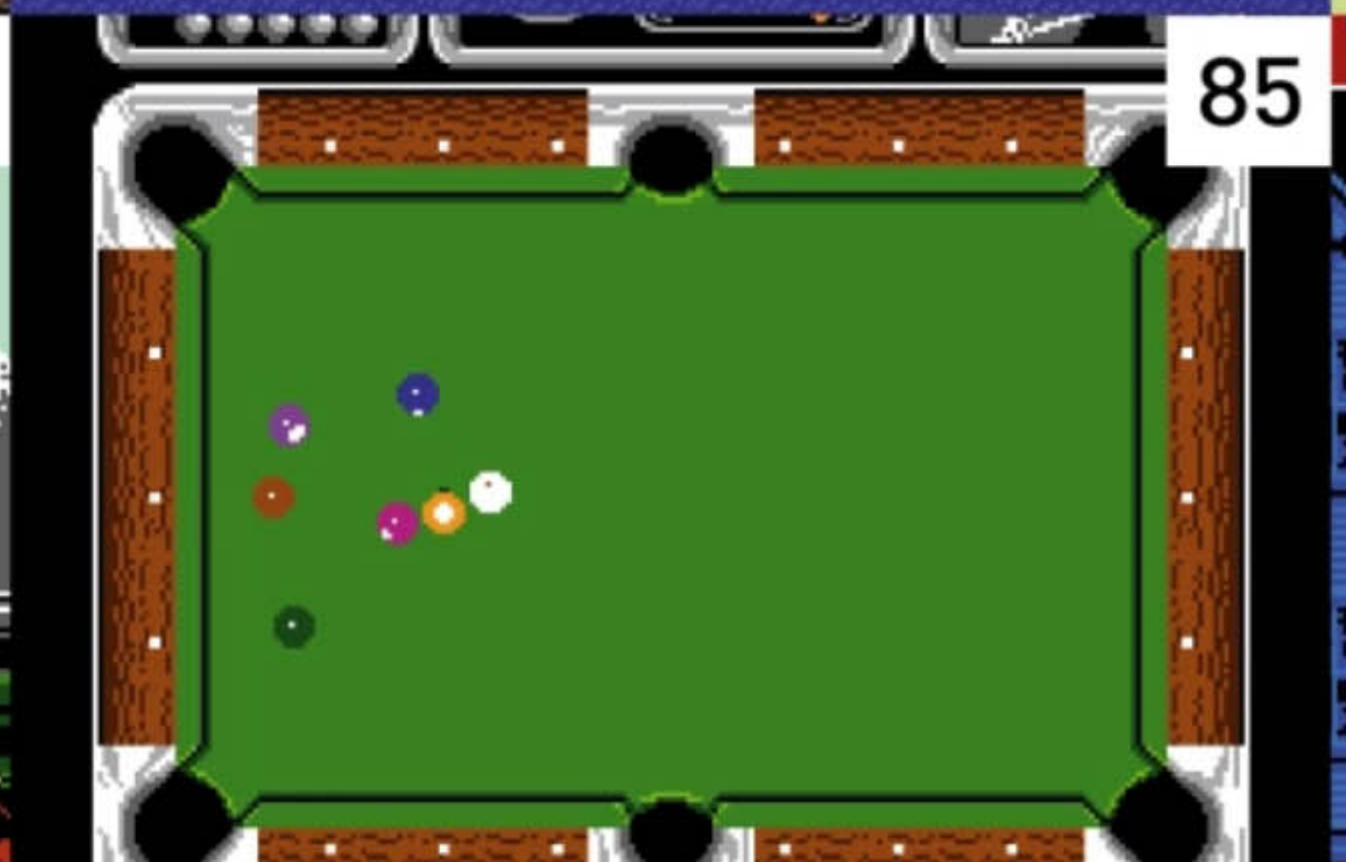

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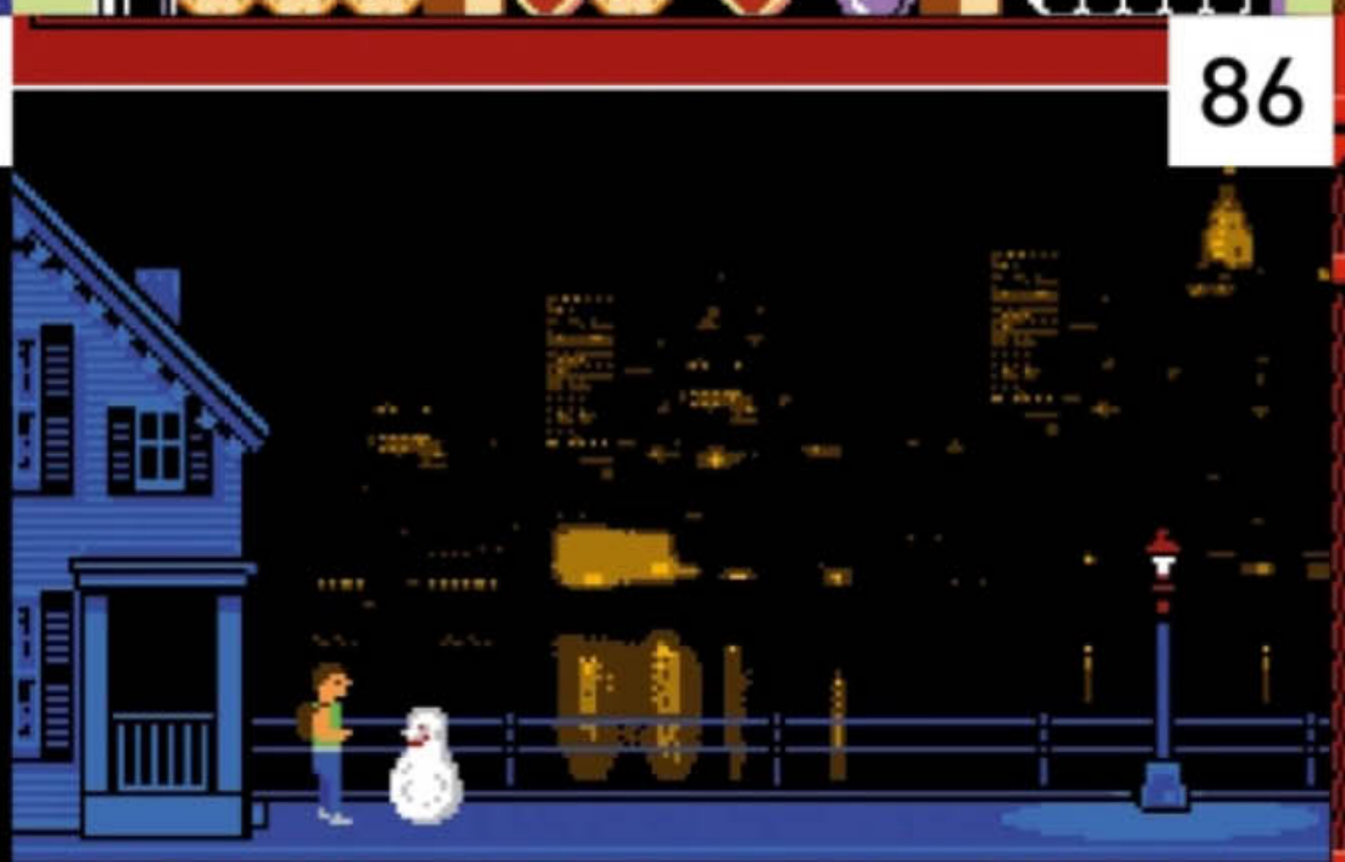

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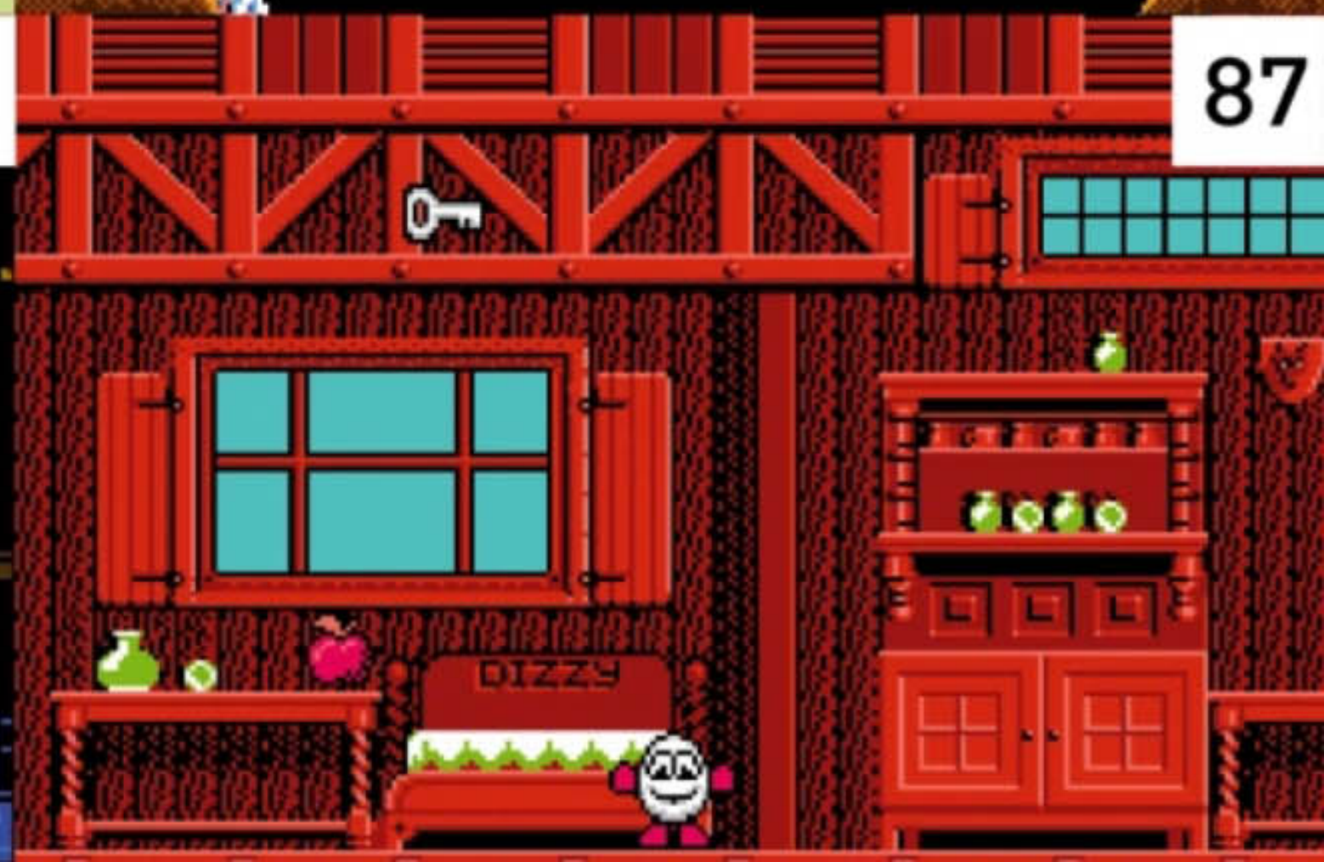


METROID

DON'T BE SCARED, IT'S ONLY A GAME…

METROID

PUSH START BUTTON

© 1986 NINTENDO

- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- **YEAR:** 1986
- **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES

HISTORY

Nintendo's *Metroid* remains one of the best adventure games to appear on the company's 8-bit console. And while it's clearly been eclipsed by later games in the series, there's still something magical about returning to the original.

For those unaware, *Metroid* tells the tale of Samus Arun, a bounty hunter who heads to the planet Zebes to retrieve a parasitic organism called a Metroid that has been captured by Space Pirates. It's a simple plot to be fair, but it's one that's rather epic in scale due to the huge environments that make up Zebes.

One of the most interesting mechanics of *Metroid* is that Samus only starts the game with a small number of abilities, with the rest having to be earned along the way. As she explores the foreboding planet, she'll come across numerous areas that are impassable – at least until she has the right item…

The beauty of *Metroid* is its fantastic structure, which causes the player to revisit areas whenever they receive the relevant upgrade. It gives *Metroid* a wonderful sense of exploration that's virtually unmatched by any other adventure on the console, even The *Legend Of Zelda*. You'll be constantly pushing yourself to discover what's hidden around the next corner, while the solid boss encounters typically require you to exploit them with your latest power-up as well.

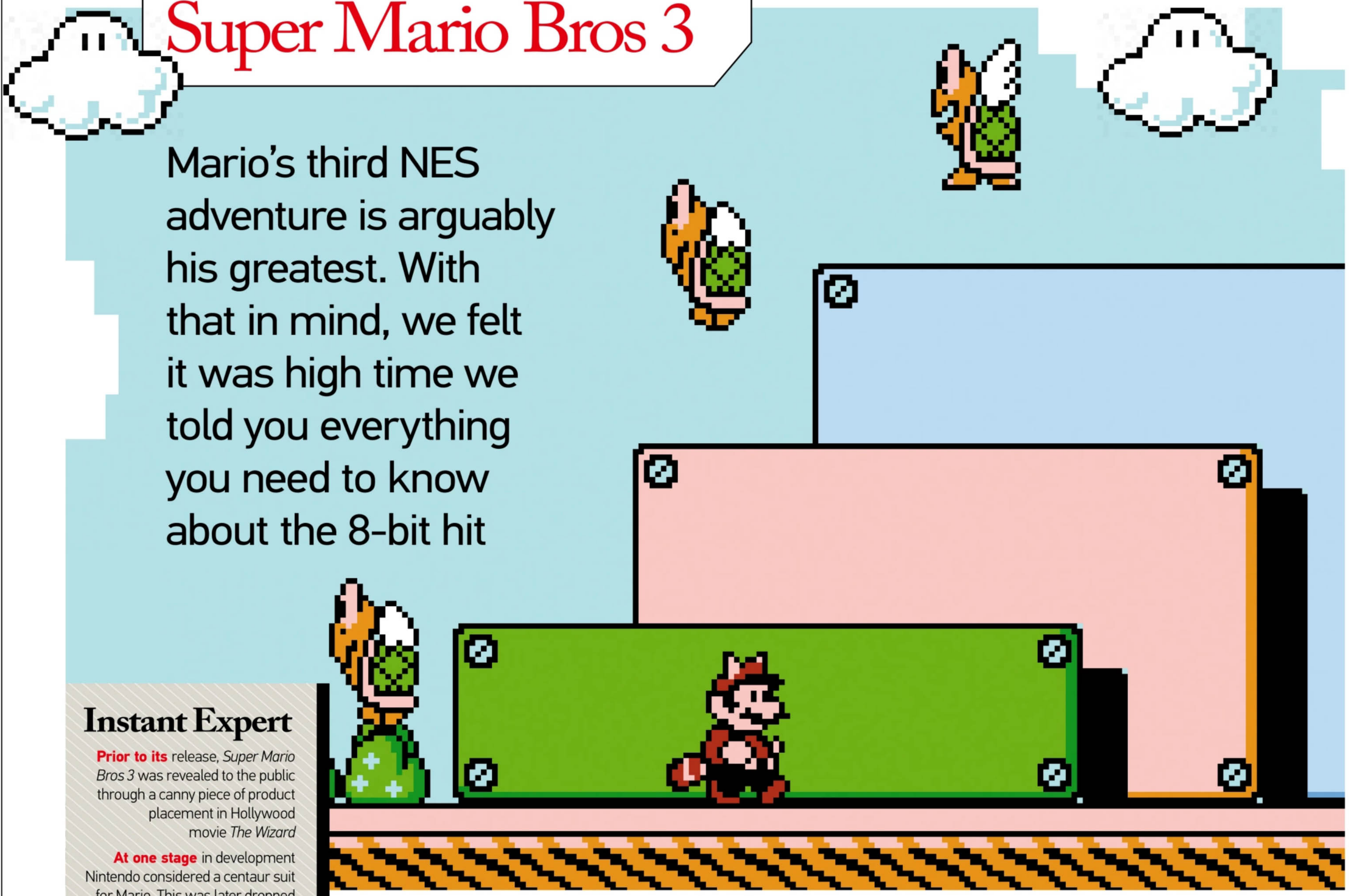
Metroid can be a rather sparse looking game at times, but this actually adds to the atmosphere, while the soundtrack itself is very organic and furthers the sense of dread felt as you explore the huge environments of Zebes.

Another interesting fact about *Metroid* and one that wasn't revealed unless you beat the game under a certain time was that lead character Samus was actually a girl, making her one of the earliest female characters, and still one of the most popular today.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO...

Super Mario Bros 3

Mario's third NES adventure is arguably his greatest. With that in mind, we felt it was high time we told you everything you need to know about the 8-bit hit



Instant Expert

Prior to its release, *Super Mario Bros 3* was revealed to the public through a canny piece of product placement in Hollywood movie *The Wizard*

At one stage in development Nintendo considered a centaur suit for Mario. This was later dropped in favour of the raccoon suit

Although the Koopalings are all named after celebrities, their appearances were based upon seven of the programmers working under Shigeru Miyamoto

At 17 million copies sold, *Super Mario Bros 3* remains one of the bestselling non-bundle games ever released. The Virtual Console version and the GBA release have sold a further 1 million and 5 million copies respectively

The idea of *Mario 3*'s ingenious overworld map was later used again, albeit in simplified form, in *Super Mario World*, and was more accurately copied in both *New Super Mario Bros* games

Super Mario Bros 3 is one of only ten games to be preserved in the US Library of Congress's Game Canon initiative. It is the only Japanese game in the list

The idea of different 'suits' for Mario to wear, rather than simple power-ups, later resurfaced in *Super Mario Galaxy*'s bee, boo and spring suits

Whether you were wealthy enough to afford one or not when it was first released, the NES was undeniably a landmark turning point for videogames. After the primacy of the Atari 2600, the clumsy DIY feel of Spectrum and C64 games, and the daunting inaccessibility of the arcades, Nintendo's unassuming grey box came along and changed everything with one simple rule: make games fun. Not every game was great, of course, but every game that Nintendo created was easy to pick up and play, controlled with a confident slickness, presented a challenge without ever being unfair, and positioned the videogame as a wondrous window into another world filled with a sense of discovery and joy. NES games were what videogames should have been all along – it's just that nobody realised until the day they were faced with them.

The crown jewel of this era is undoubtedly *Super Mario Bros 3*. While the two previous *Mario* games had been exceptional adventures when compared to those games available on other systems of the time, *Super Mario Bros 3* was exceptional when compared to Nintendo's own achievements. It took the template laid out by the original *Super Mario Bros* and expanded it in every possible direction, resulting in a bigger, longer, deeper and even taller videogame. Its seemingly never-ending wealth of interactions epitomised the NES software catalogue and established the *Mario* series as something truly special in the world of videogames.

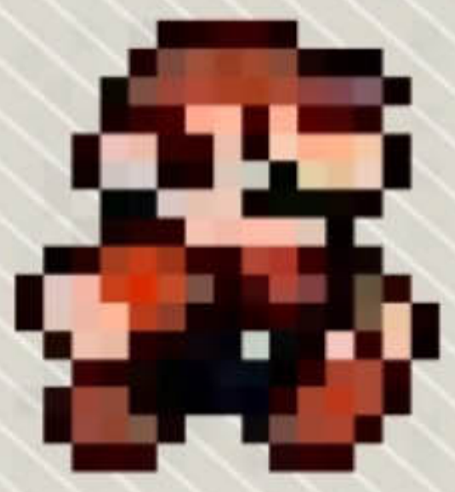
It might not have seemed like such a revolutionary game at first glance, since the opening few seconds were almost exactly the same as *Super Mario Bros*. The player is put in control of a diminutive Mario, with a paltry two commands – run or jump – at his disposal, the ability to eat a mushroom to grow in size, and the same old enemies – the Goomba and Koopa Troopa – to take on in the same old way. Only a fresh lick of paint indicated that this was a different game at all. But even within that first level, there are a couple of hints of the greatness to come. Around halfway through, we come across the first of many new power-ups that feature throughout the game, a leaf that illogically transforms Mario into a rather cute looking raccoon, complete with tiny little ears and a bushy stripy tail.

Even more illogically, we discover that running at high speed for long enough while dressed in the raccoon suit will cause Mario to lift from the ground and fly through the air, eventually leading to a hidden batch of coins high above the ground. And, with that, the tone is set for a game that has a new surprise around every corner and a secret treat to discover where most games would make do with the rudimentary and the obvious.

Nintendo and, more accurately, Shigeru Miyamoto, had played

Pixel Perfect

The many sumptuous sprites of Super Mario Bros 3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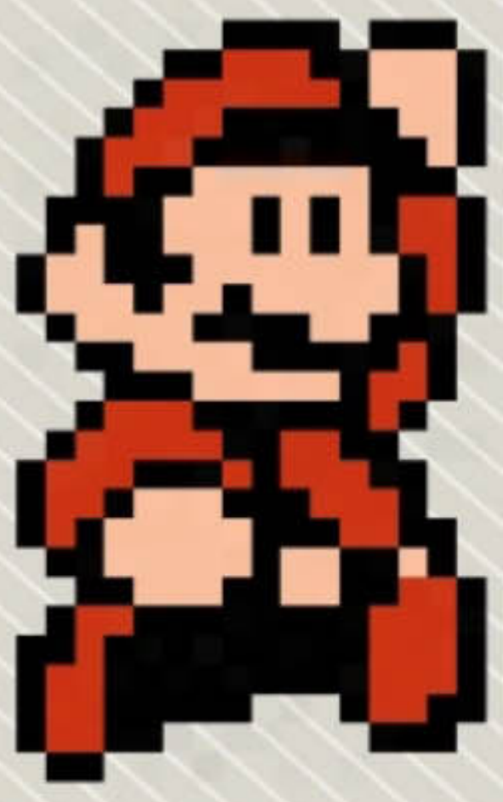
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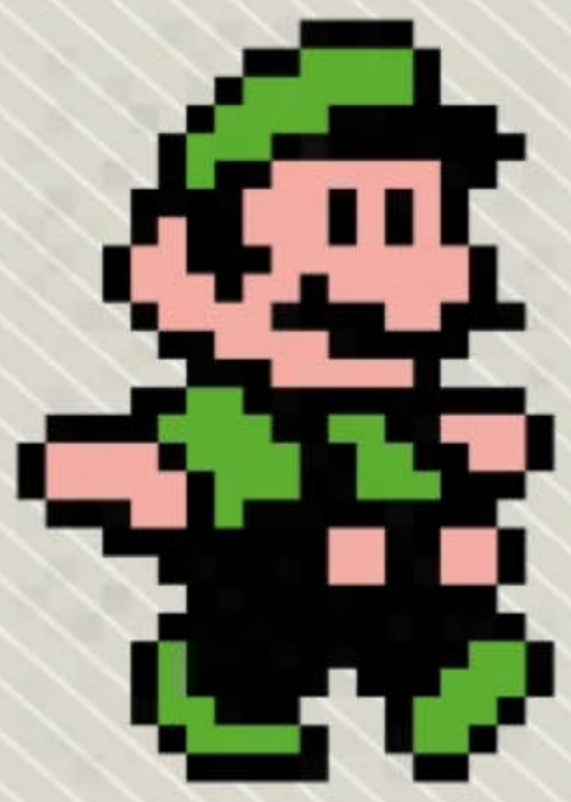
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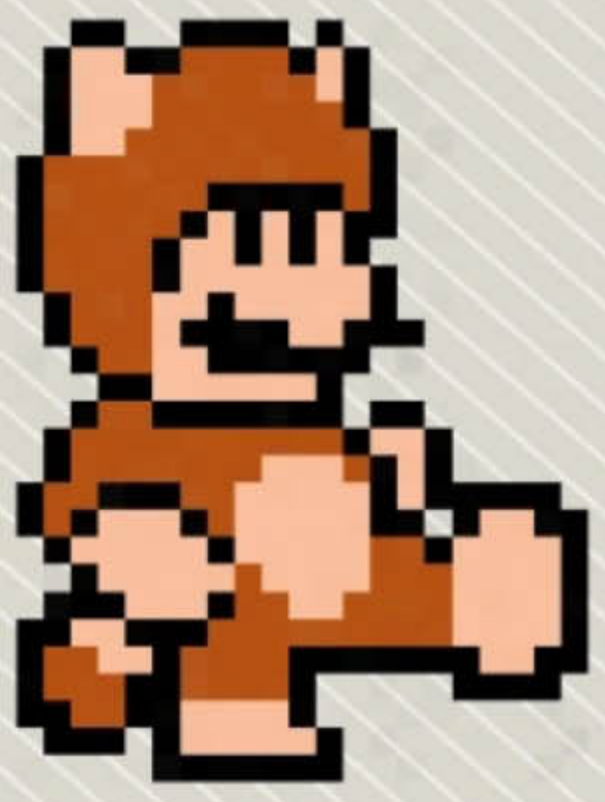
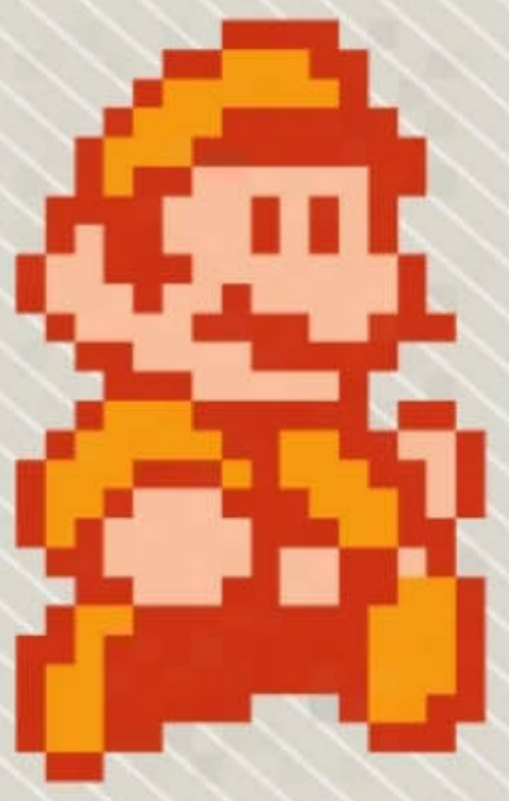
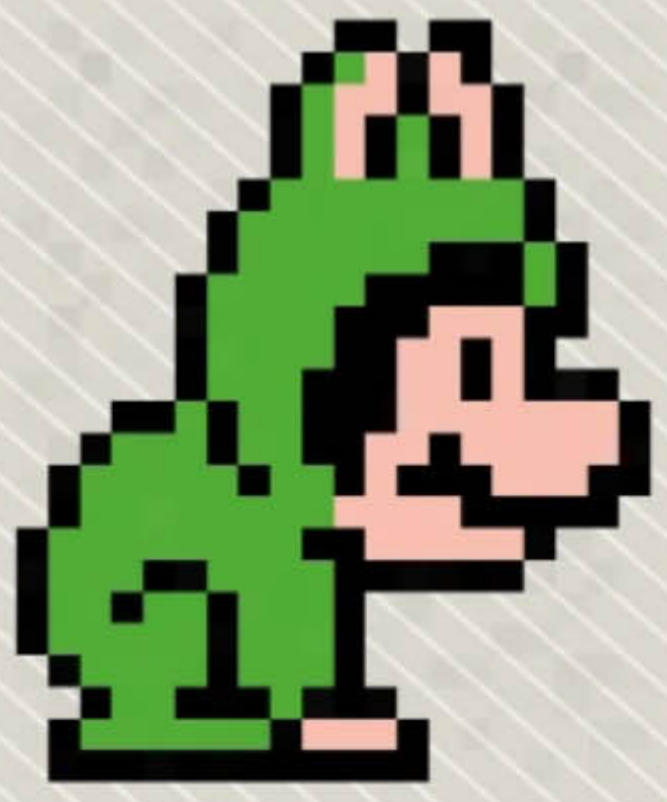

» Tanooki Mario


» Fire Mario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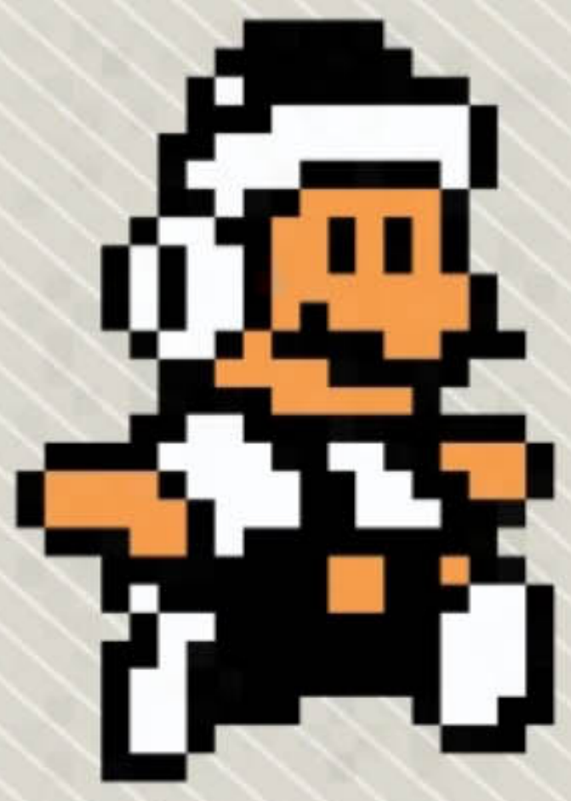
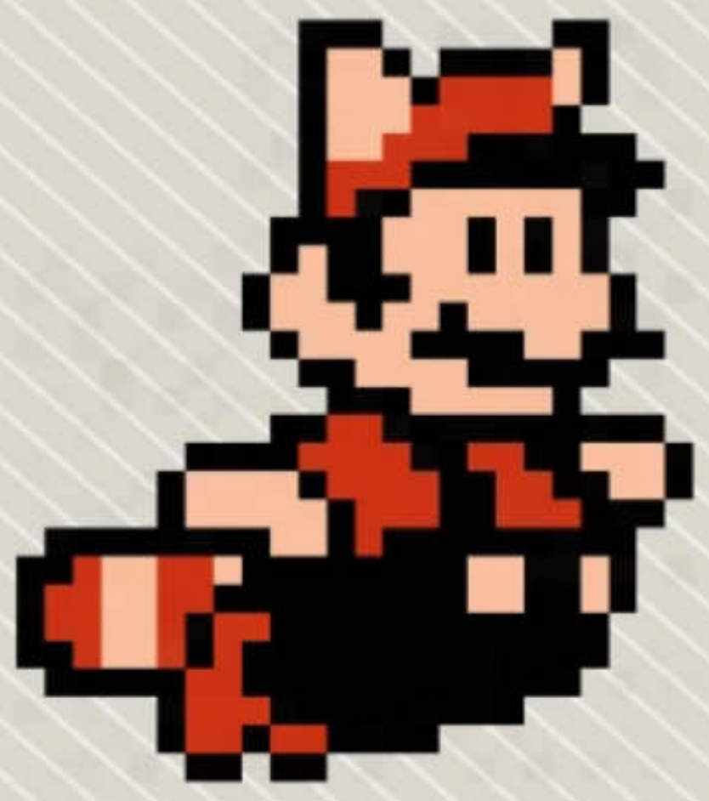
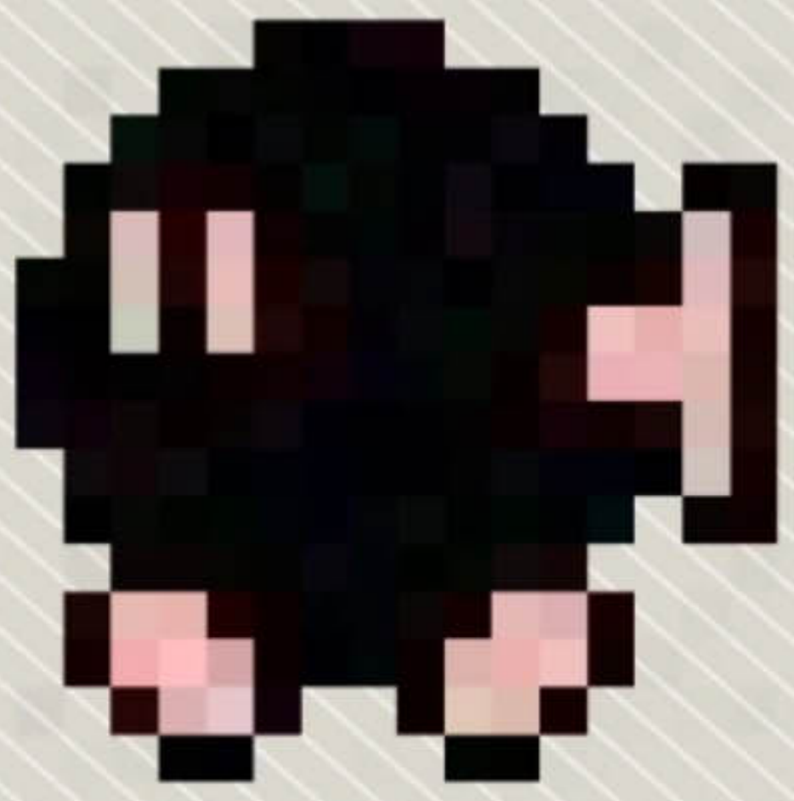
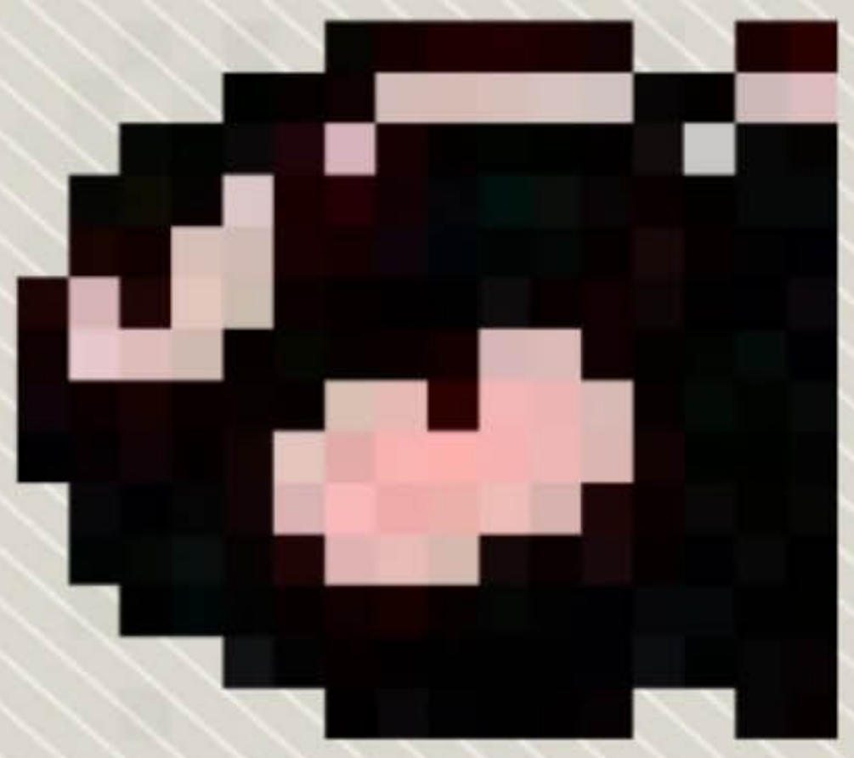

» Hammer Mario


» Raccoon Mario


» Bob-omb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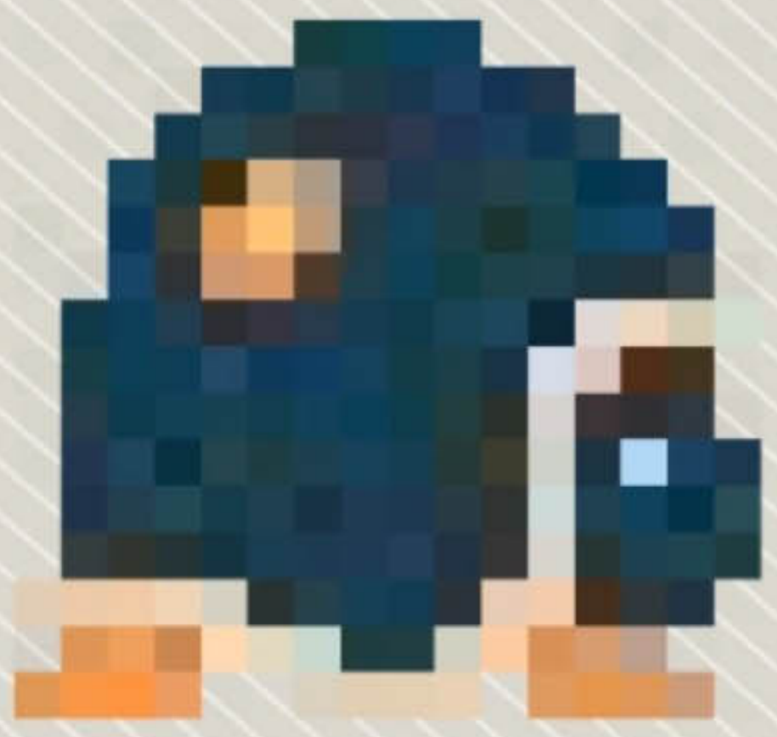
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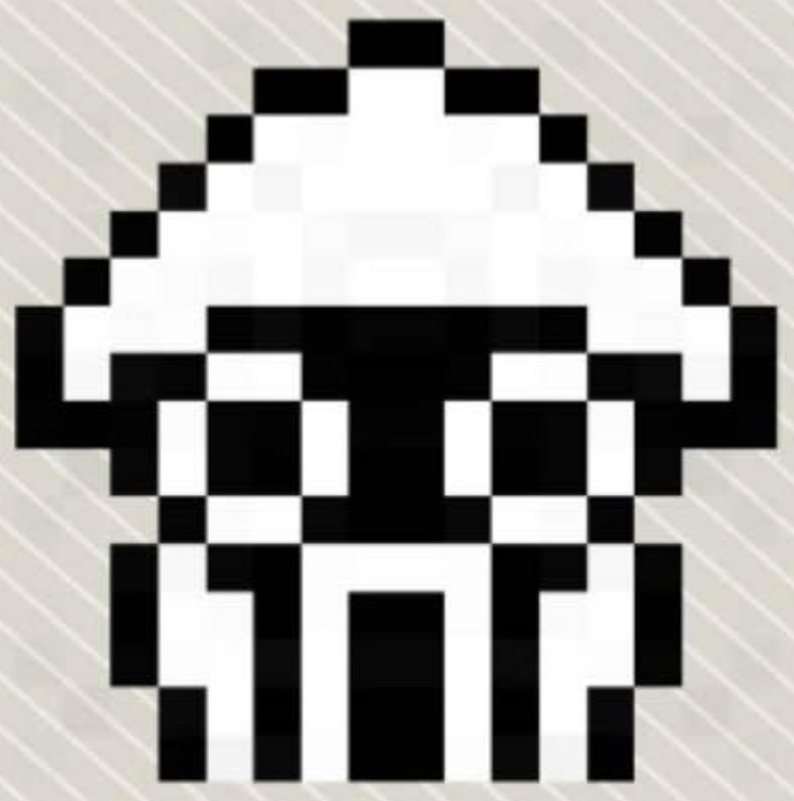
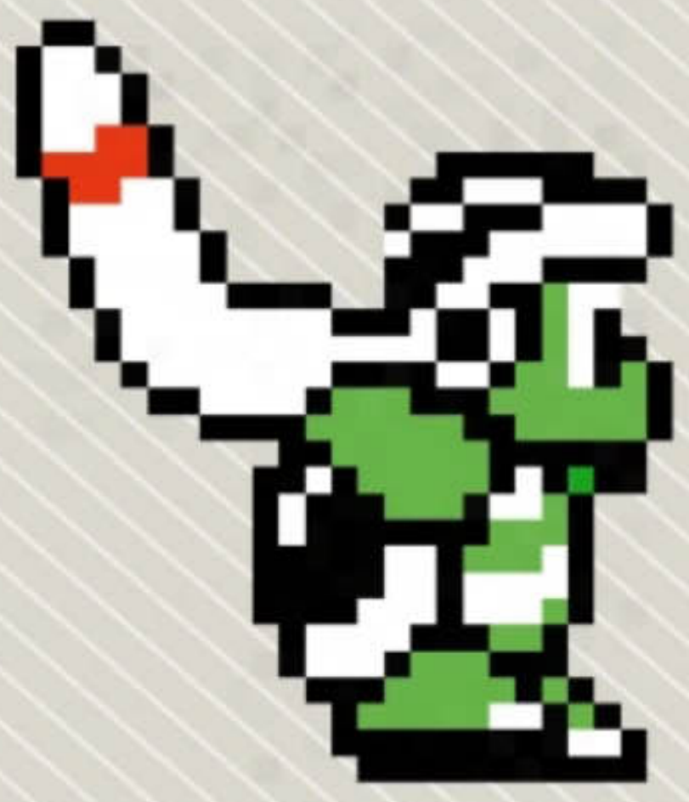
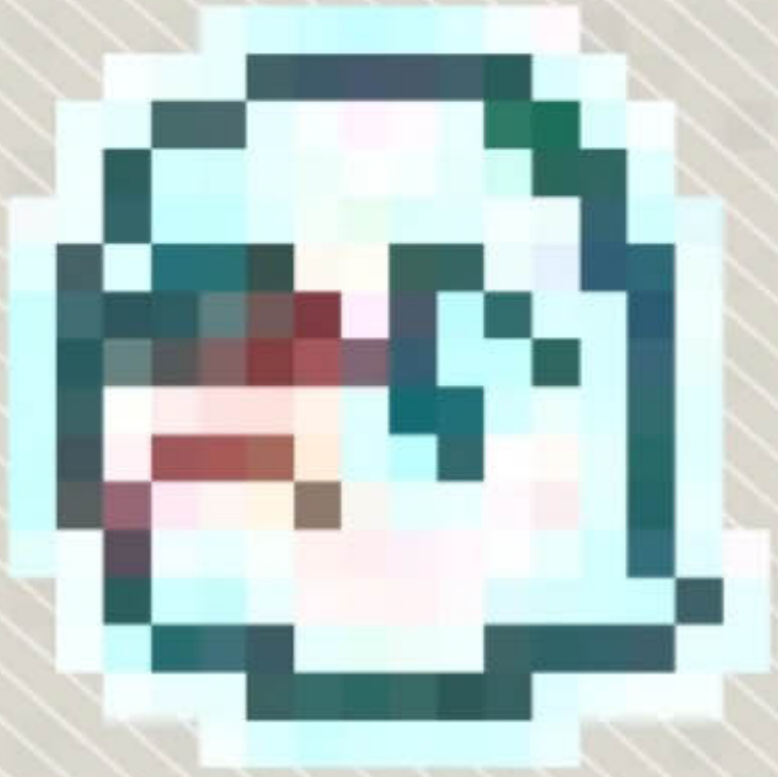
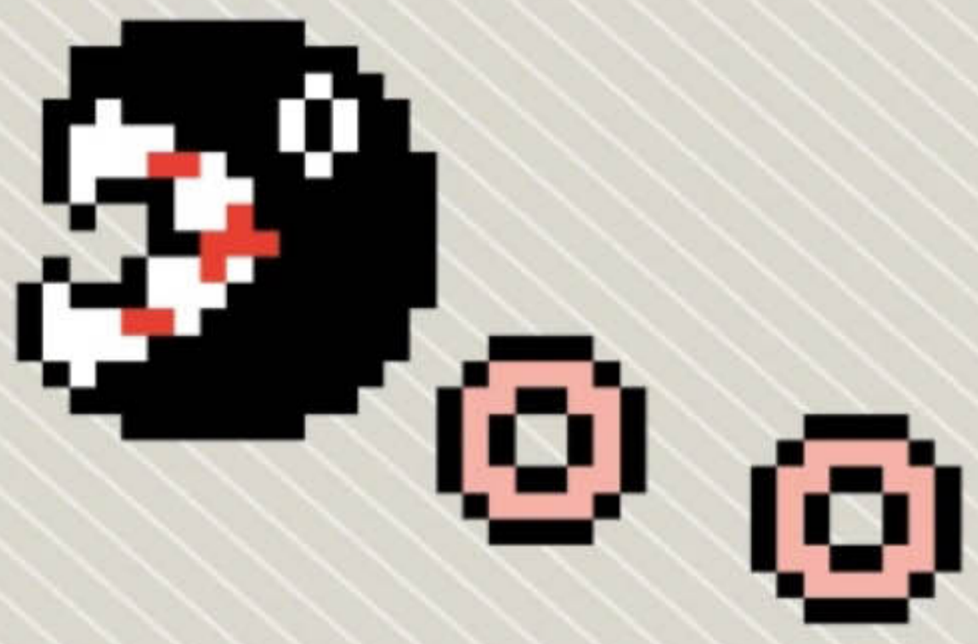

» Blooper


» Boomerang Bros


» Boo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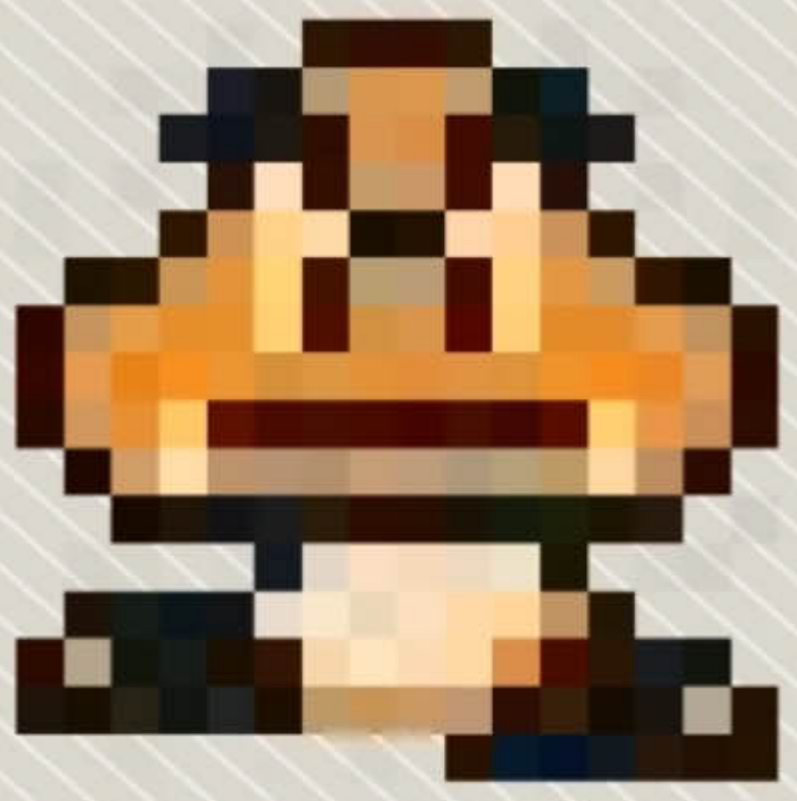
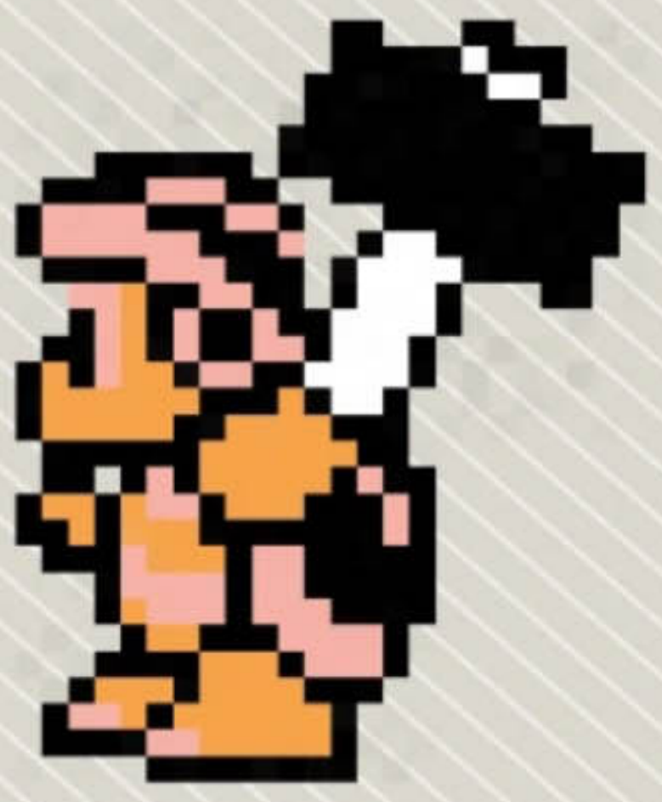

» Goomba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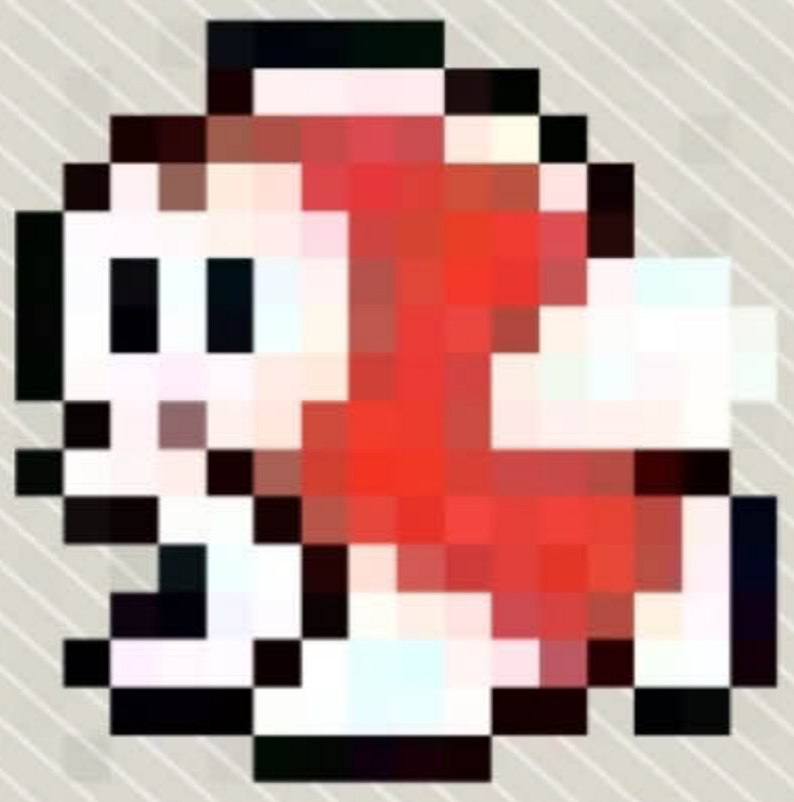
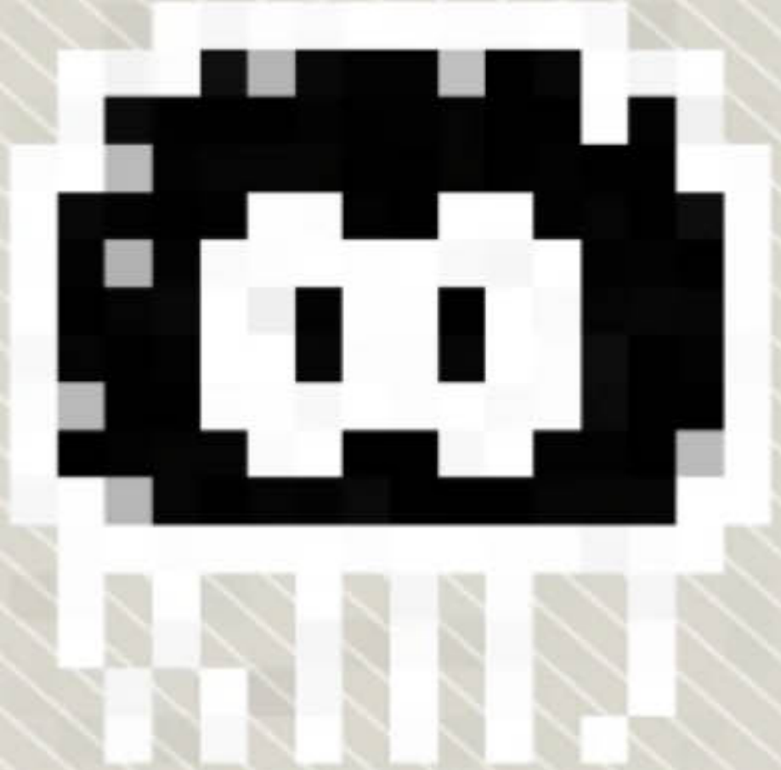

» Cheep Cheep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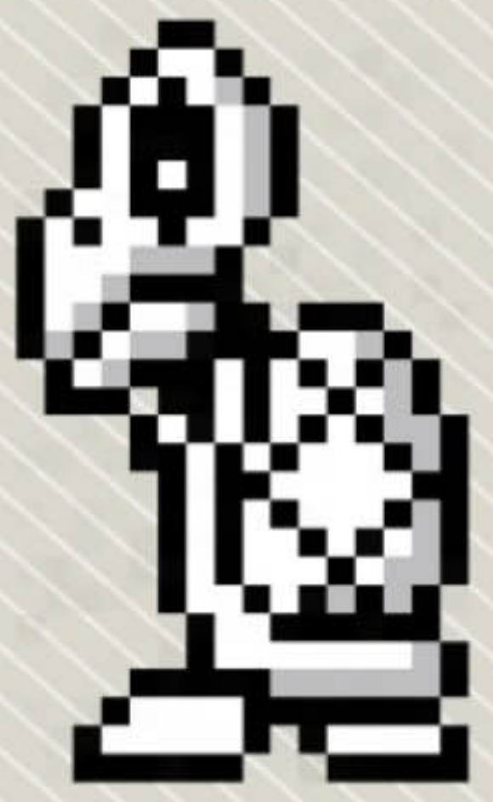
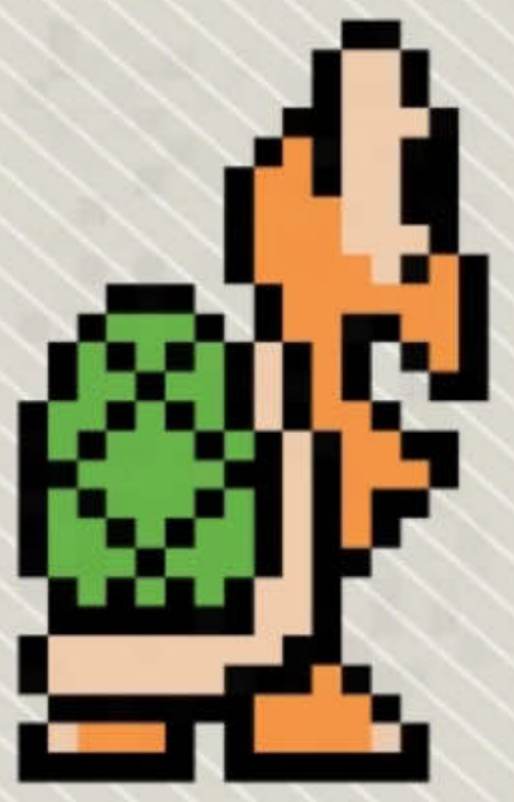
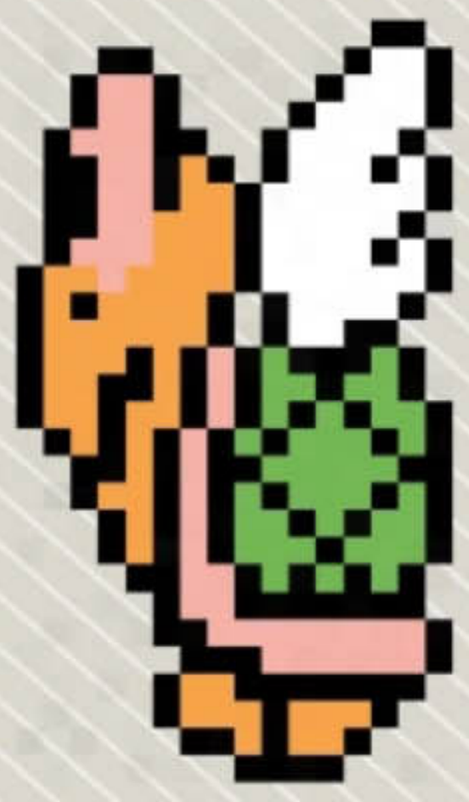

» Dry Bones


» Koopa Troopa (Green)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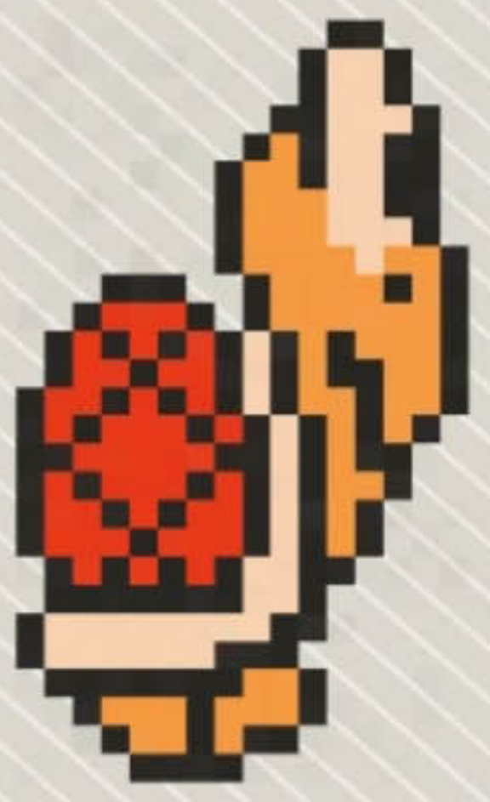
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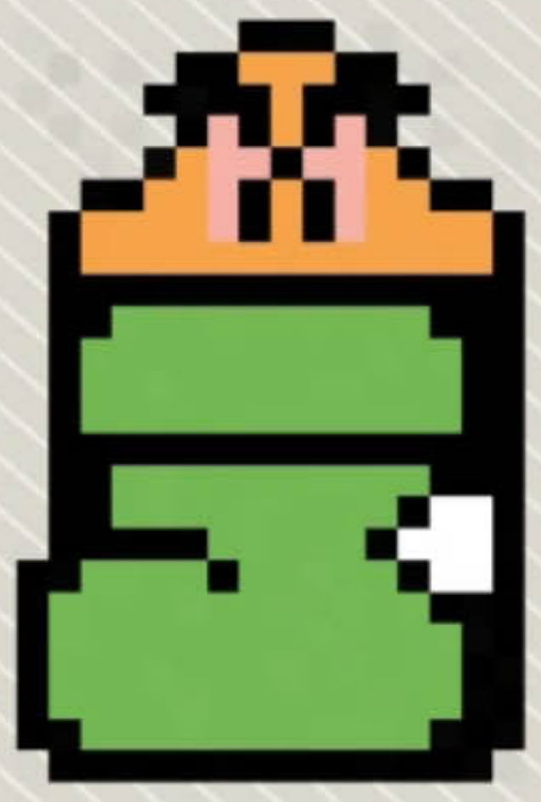
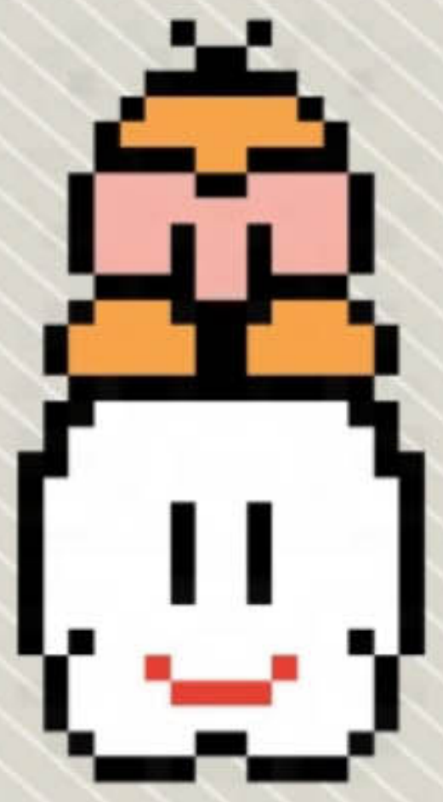

» Kuribo Goomba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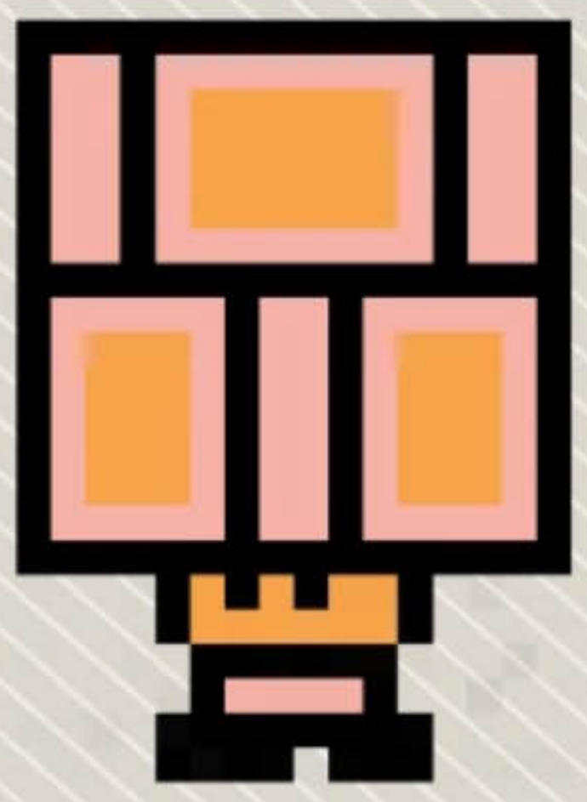
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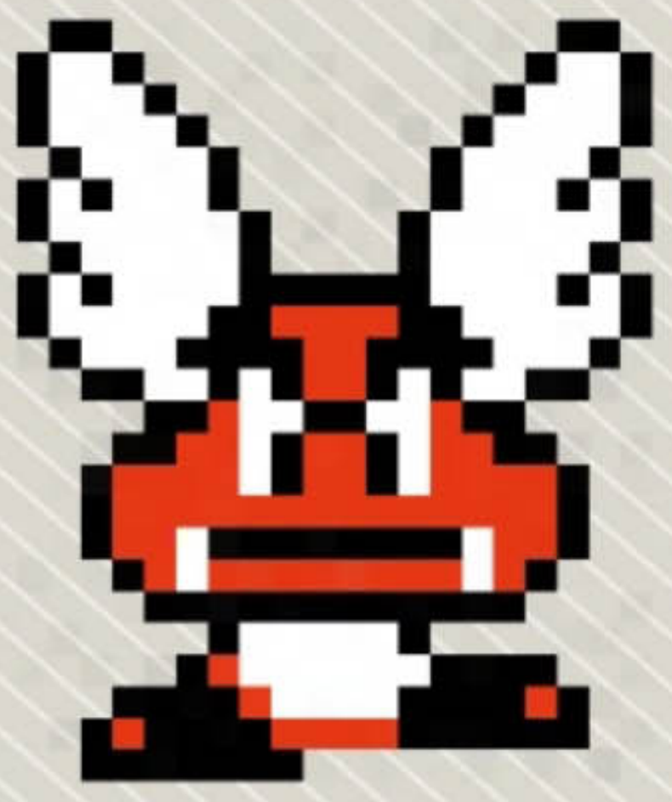
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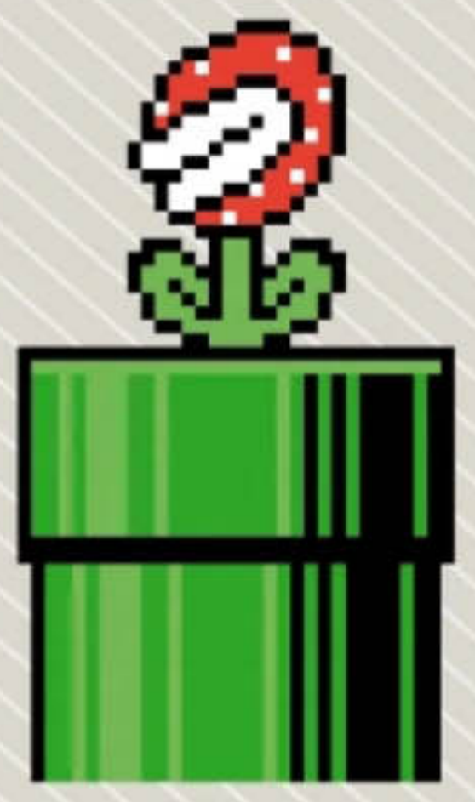
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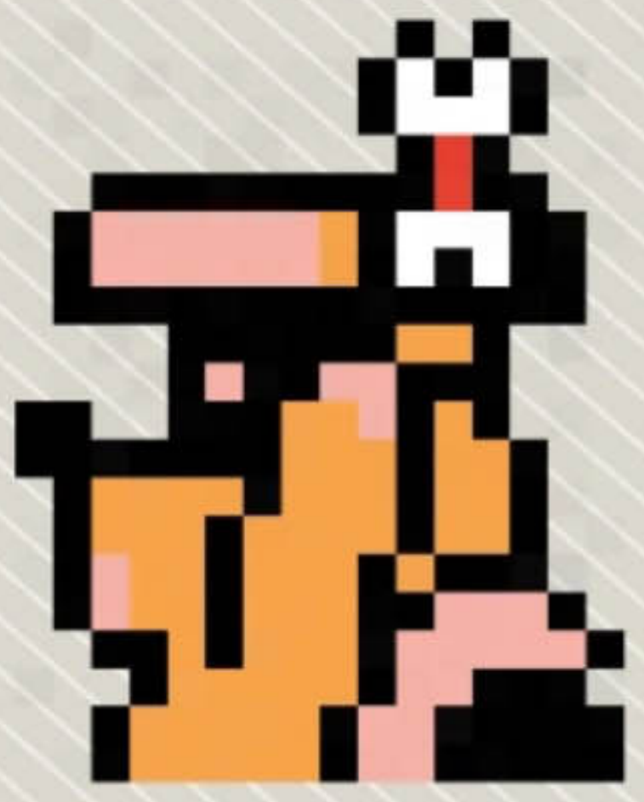
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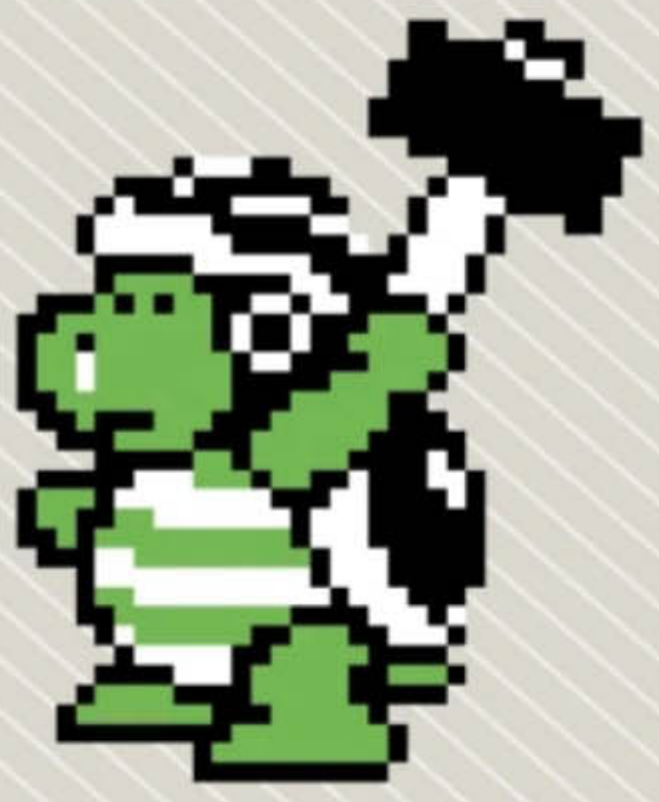
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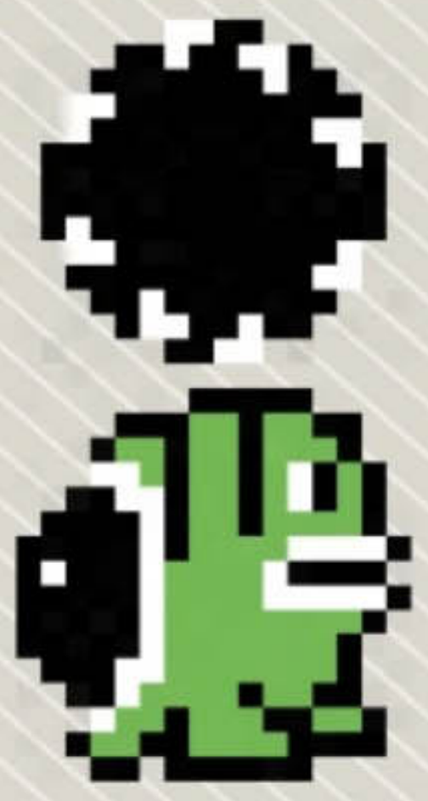
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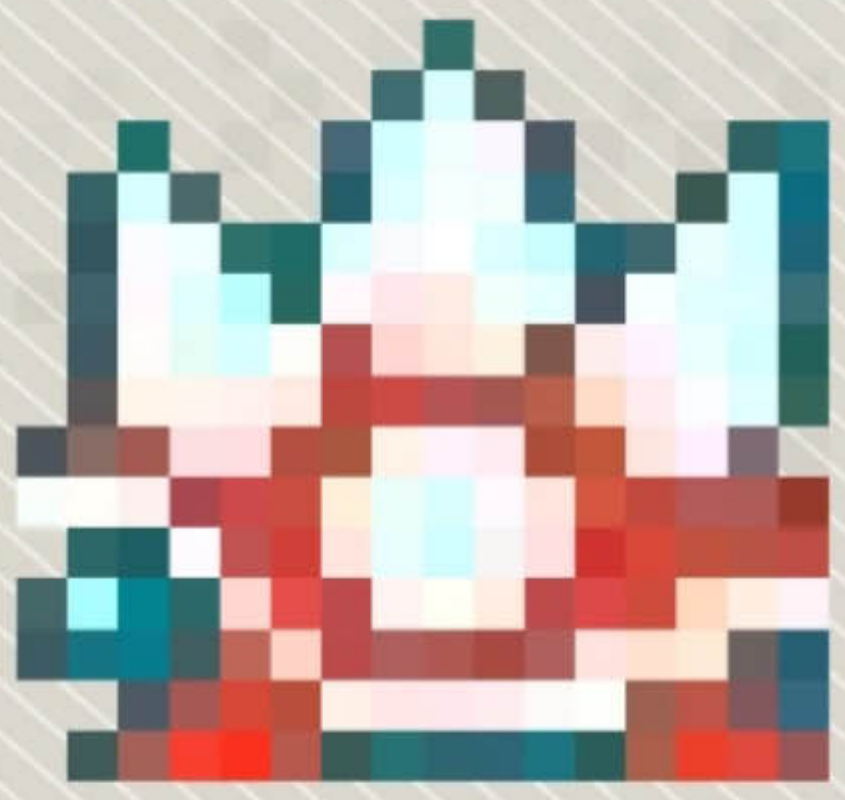
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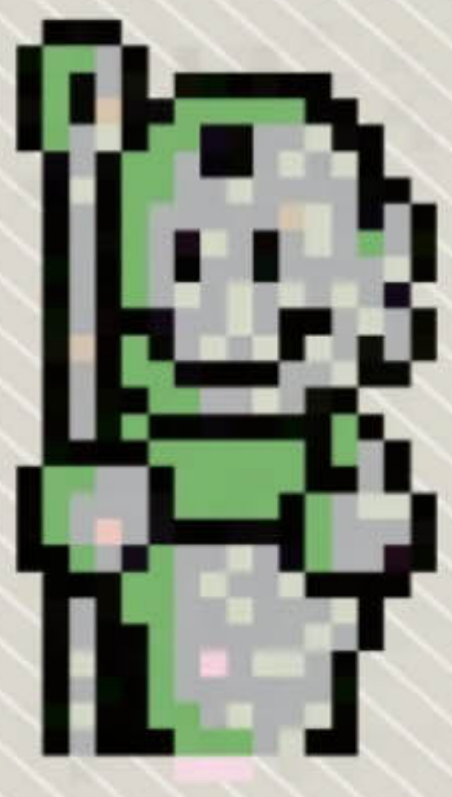
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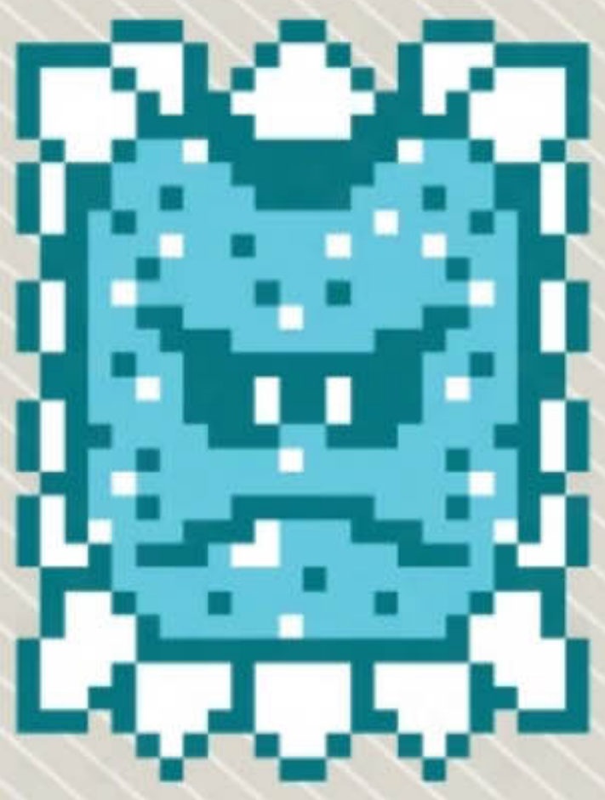
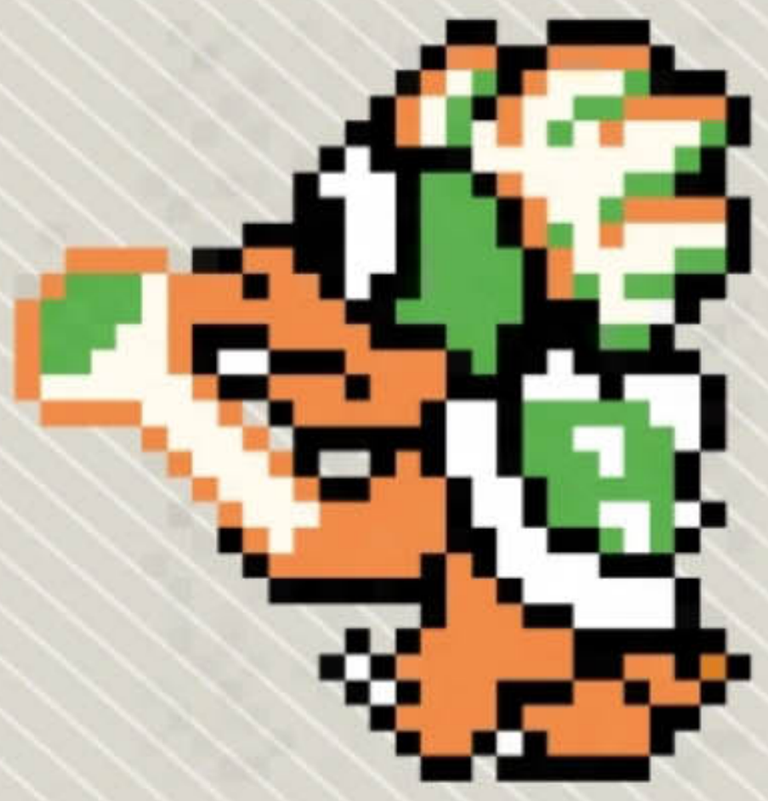
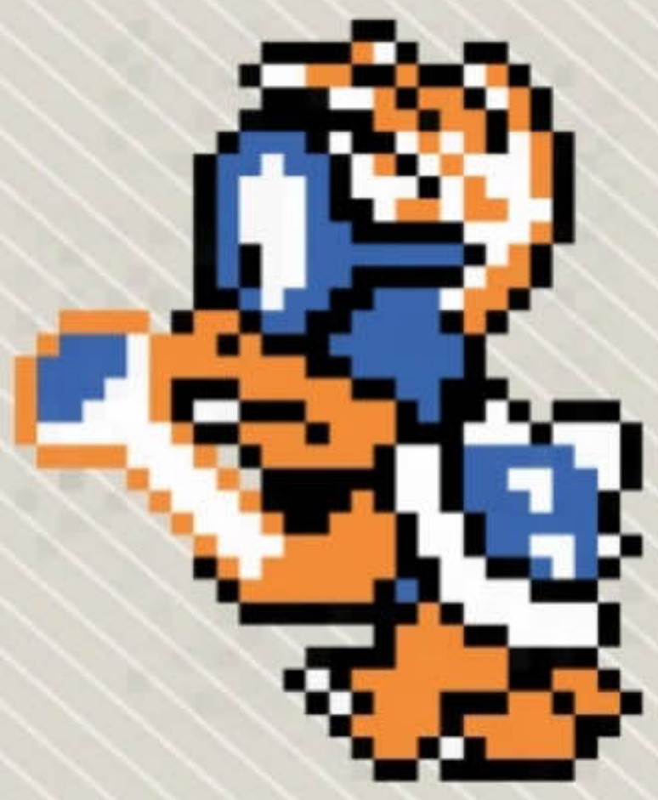
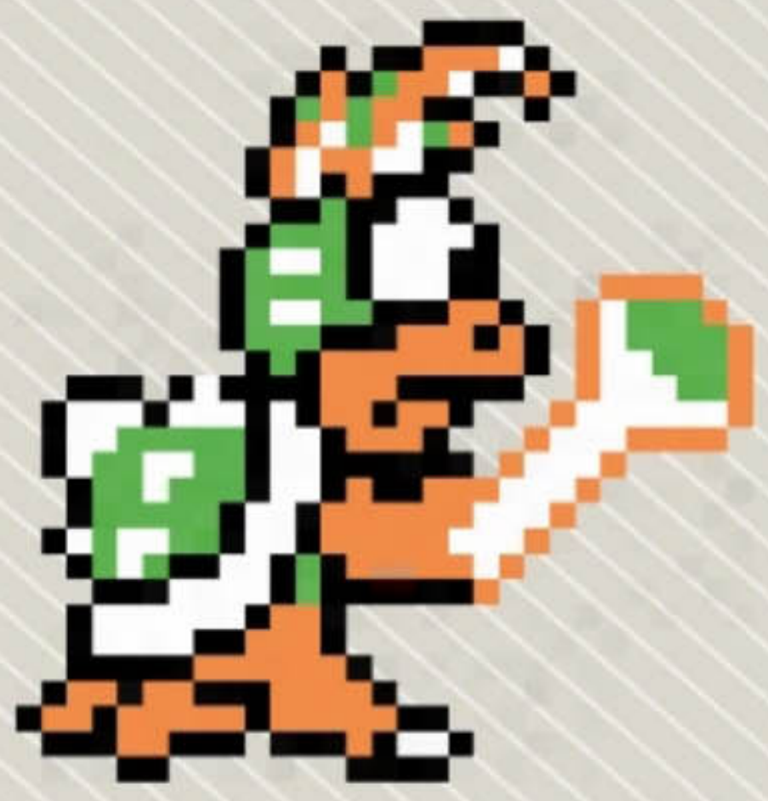

» Thwomp


» Iggy


» Larry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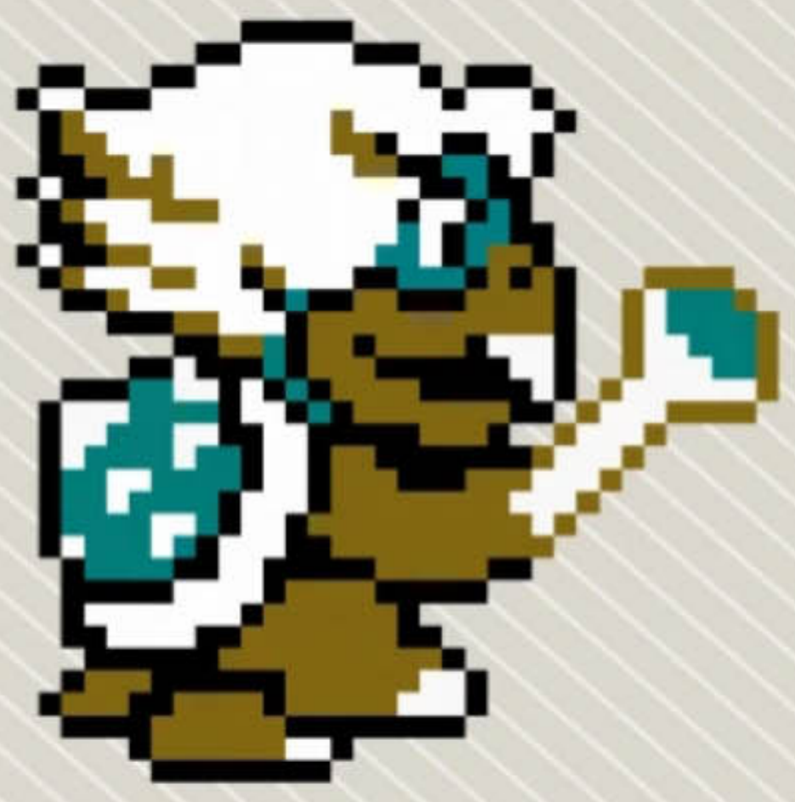
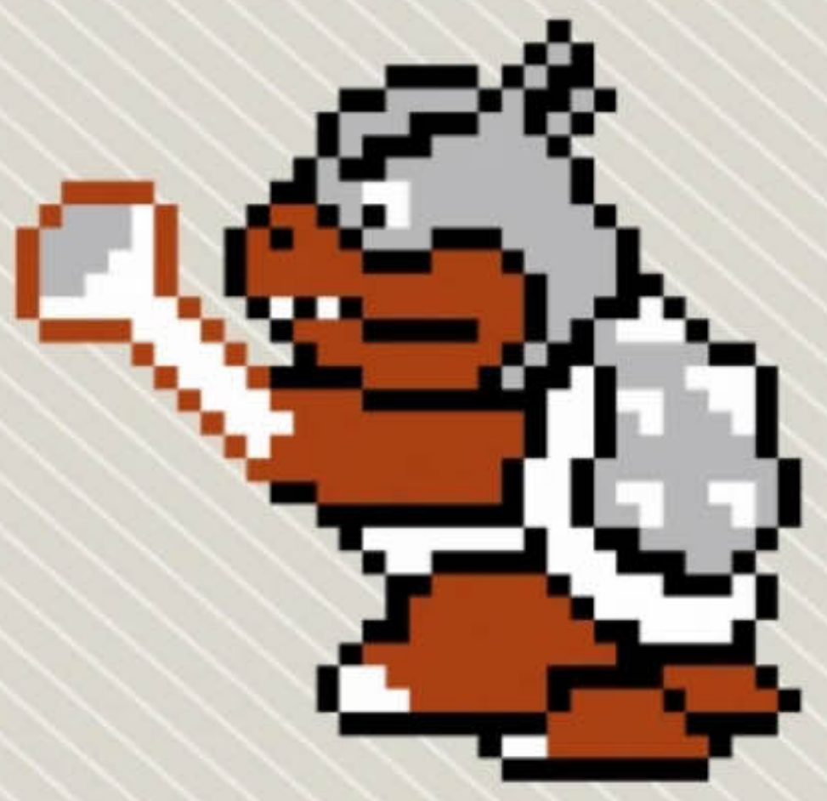

» Ludwig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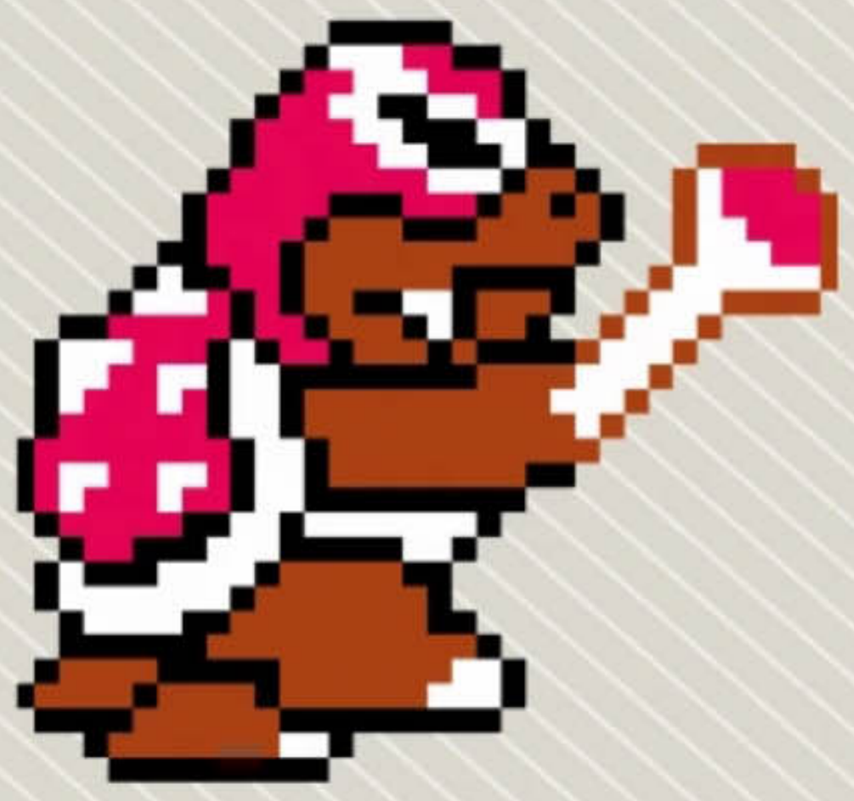
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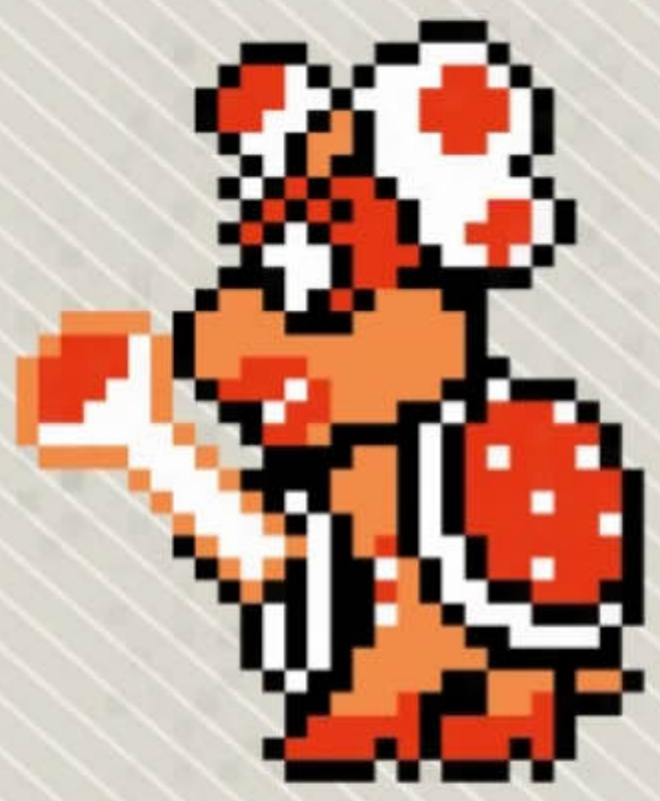
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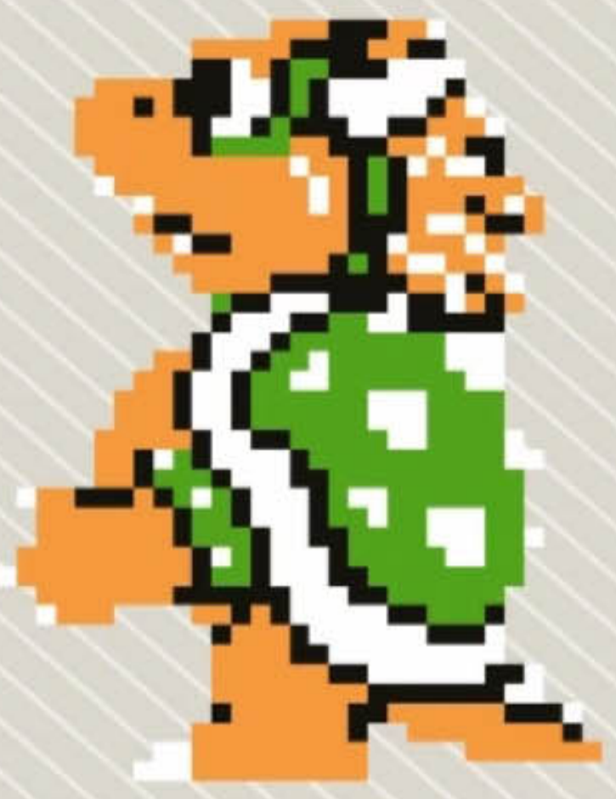

» Bowser

Critical Reception

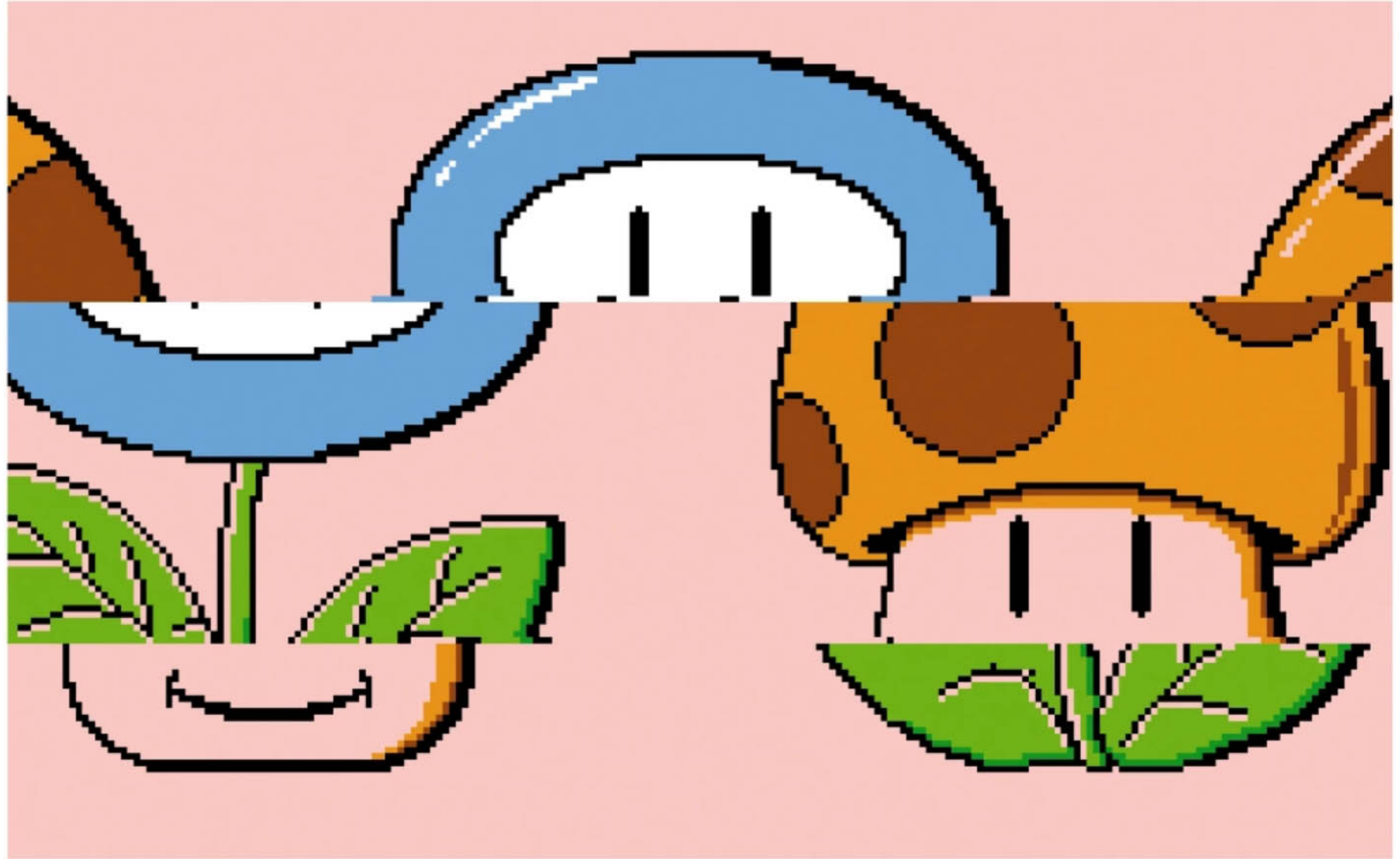
What the gaming press thought…

MEAN MACHINES
£1.75
SUPER MARIO BROS 3
BEST CONSOLE GAME EVER?
MASTER SYSTEM SONIC – FIRST PIC!

> "Once you start playing you want to keep going, just to see what surprises are around the next corner! I ended up playing it all night!"
>
> **- JULIAN RIGNALL,** MEAN MACHINES, 1991

around with secrets before, of course. Who could forget the warp pipes of *Super Mario Bros*, accessed by running along the top of the level of World 1-2? Or the many secrets hidden behind the walls and bushes of Hyrule in *The Legend Of Zelda*? Miyamoto was famous for taking a childlike curiosity and sense of discovery and using it as inspiration for a videogame. And in *Super Mario Bros 3*, he turned that curiosity into an art form, every inch of the Mushroom Kingdom littered with secret areas and random events.

Not even the menus were safe from this playful sandbox feel. Rather than simply progress from one stage to another in *Mario 3*, the player was presented with a map screen somewhat akin to a board game, allowing them to move Mario around the board and actually *choose* which levels he would tackle next, take in some mini-game distractions, and figure out how to take a short cut or two. Take the Hammer Bros that wandered around the map screen, for example: bump into one and you'd be transported to a confrontation with two of the deadliest enemies in the *Mario* series. Most players would do everything to avoid them, but if you were brave enough to take them on and win you'd be rewarded with a random power-up that, if you were lucky, would be a hammer that could break certain rocks on the map and open up new routes to the end of the world.



» [NES] This sliding mini-game was one of several that could earn bonuses for the player between levels.

And, of course, there was the now infamous Warp Whistle. Like the warp pipes of the first game, the whistle allowed experienced players to skip ahead to the more challenging later levels. But figuring out how to find those whistles was a much harder proposition. The first, for example, required the player to discover that it was possible to actually enter the background layer of the stage in World 1-3 by crouching on an unassuming white block for several seconds. Once into the background, Mario could run all the way along the stage, safe from enemy attack, and beyond the goal to a secret Toad House where he would be rewarded with a Warp Whistle.

This trick was actually one of the simpler secrets to be uncovered in *Super Mario Bros 3*, but it highlighted the constant creativity that had been poured into Nintendo's game. One that transformed a wandering Hammer Brother into an airship, for example, could only be activated by finishing a level in a time with an even number at the end while also holding a multiple of 11 coins. Such formulae were cleverly used to give the game a mysterious feeling of randomness, while others, like the Warp Whistle secret, were more about engendering a sense of exploration in the player.

Either way, these secrets and random events made *Super Mario Bros 3* a game way ahead of its time. It was a game that could be played over and over again, each playthrough offering a new surprise over the last. It was a game that offered real choice to the player, years before the branching narrative RPG became popular. And it was a game so packed with new and exciting elements to discover that some of its parts took on a near-mythical status, allowing fellow players to trade their discoveries and speculate about what might also be hidden. 20 years on, it's a game that

Twin Galaxies High Scores

SPEED RUN

- **NAME:** RICHARD URETA
- **TIME:** 00:11:15

FASTEST FULL COMPLETION (NO WARP WHISTLES)

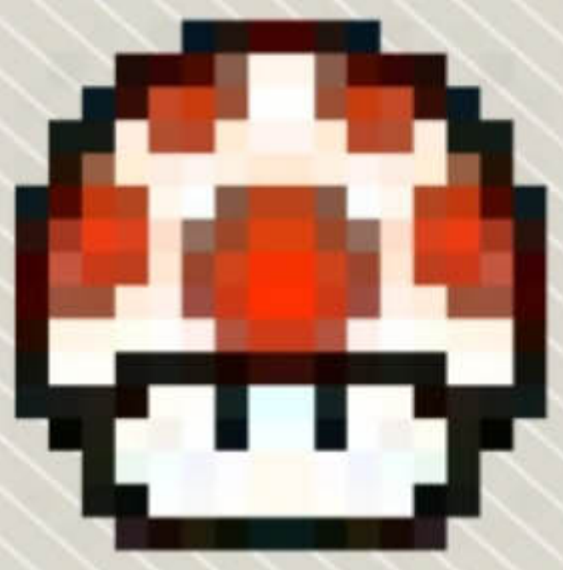
- **NAME:** KYLE GOEWERT
- **TIME:** 01:27:34

5 LIFE GAME

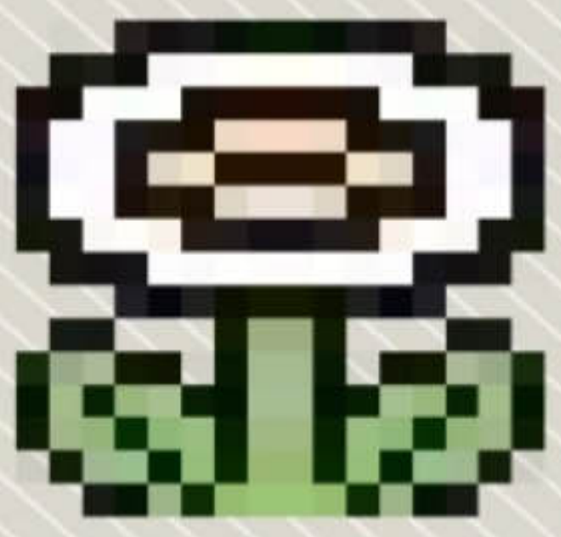
- **NAME:** KYLE GOEWERT
- **TIME:** 2,568,080

Power-Ups

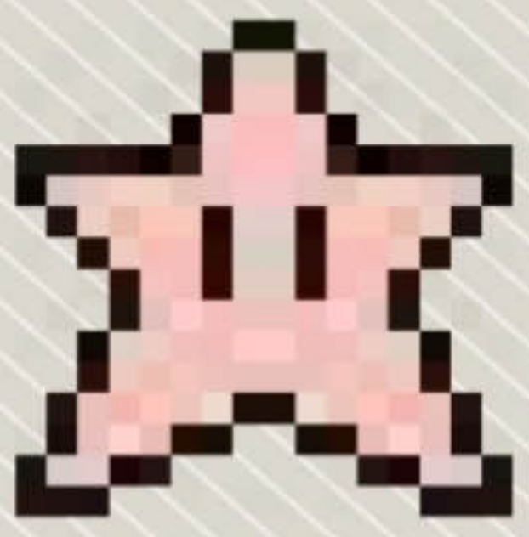
Mario is famed for his power-ups, and Super Mario Bros 3 had some of the greatest ever seen in the whole series



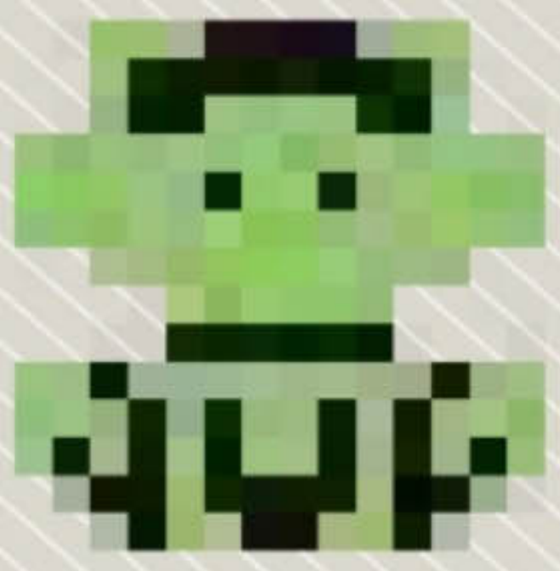
»Mushroom
An old favourite. Transforms Mario into the larger Super Mario. Effectively acts as an extra life.



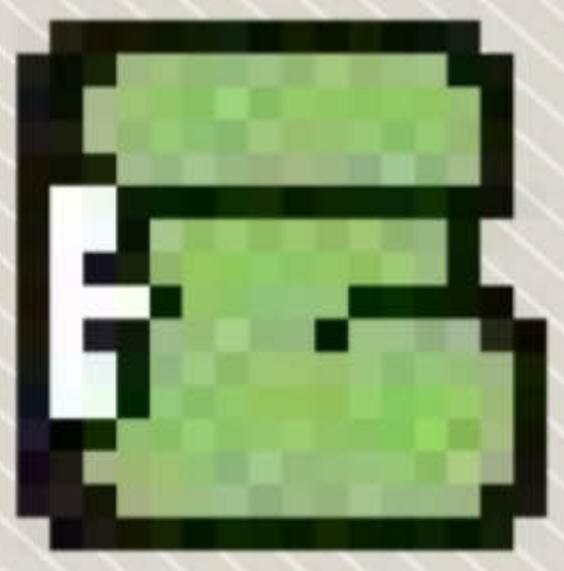
»Fire Flower
Another classic. This one grants Mario the ability to throw fireballs for a limited time.



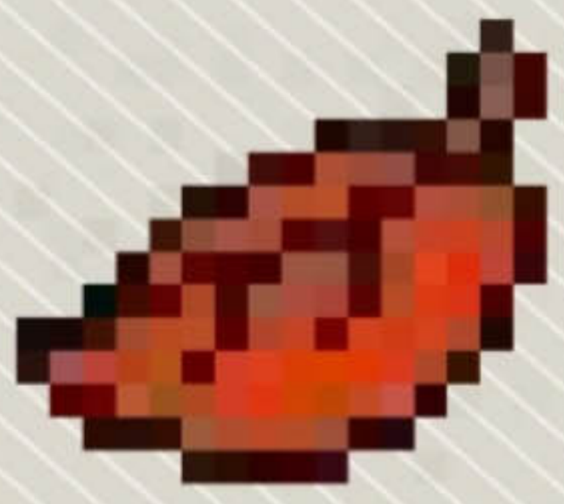
»Super Star
Makes Mario invulnerable for a short period of time.



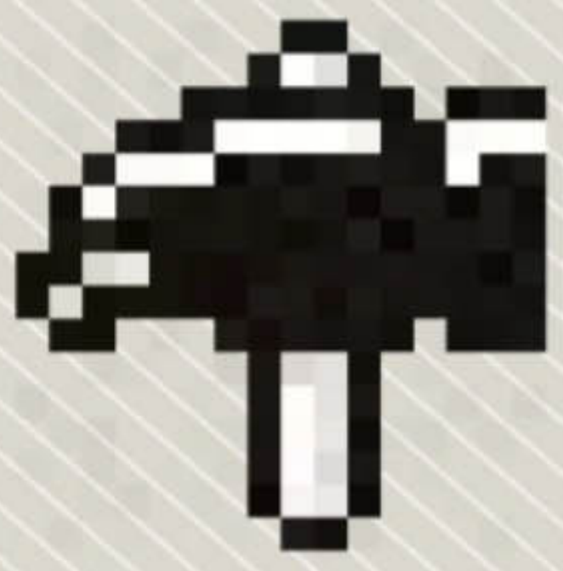
»Frog Suit
Turns Mario into a frog, granting him exceptional hopping and swimming ability.



»Kuribo
A very rare boot that we find a Goomba hopping around in. Mario can use it like a vehicle.



»Leaf
Turns Mario into a raccoon and grants him the ability of flight.



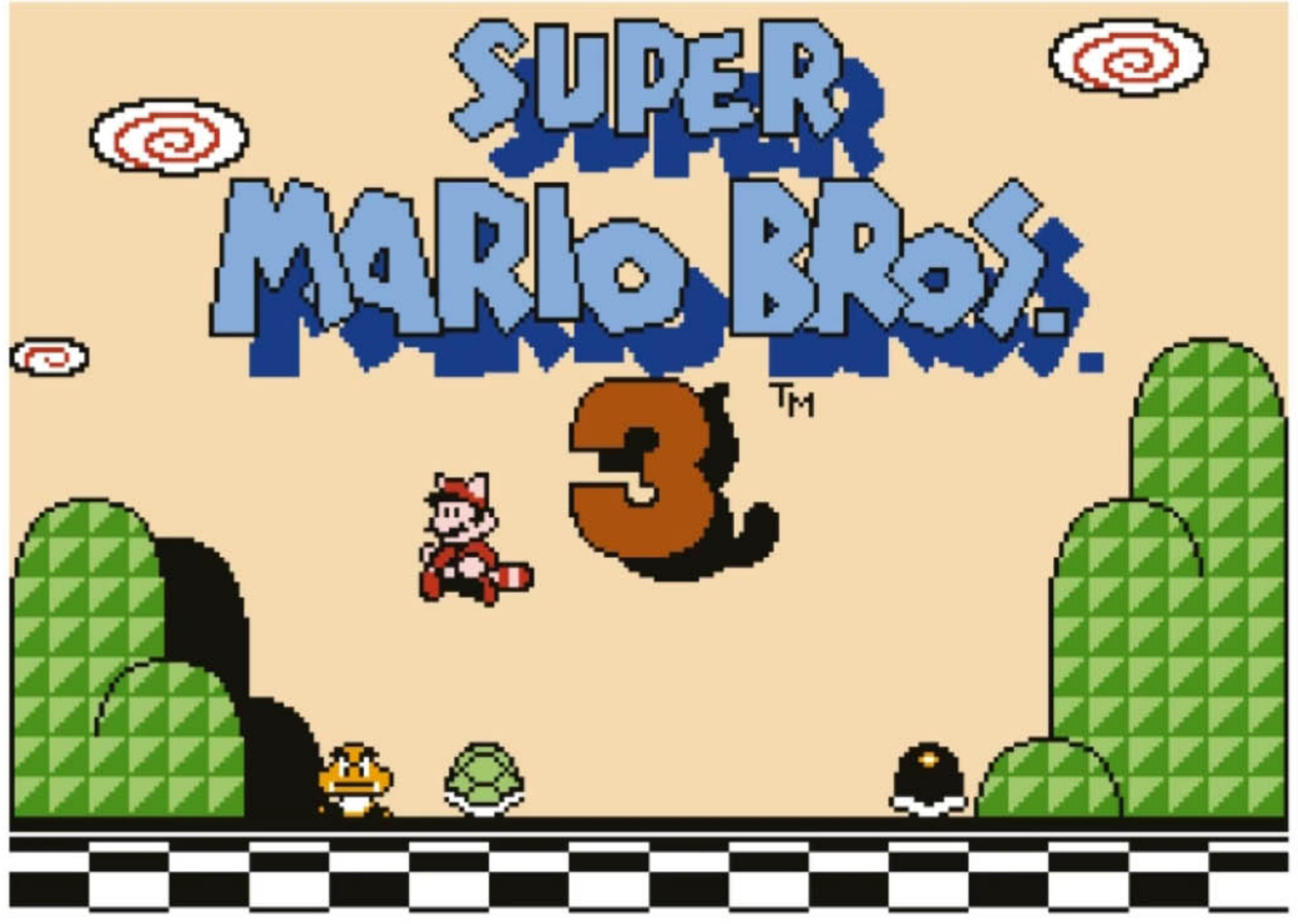
»Hammer
Transforms Mario into a Hammer Brother, with the ability to throw hammers.

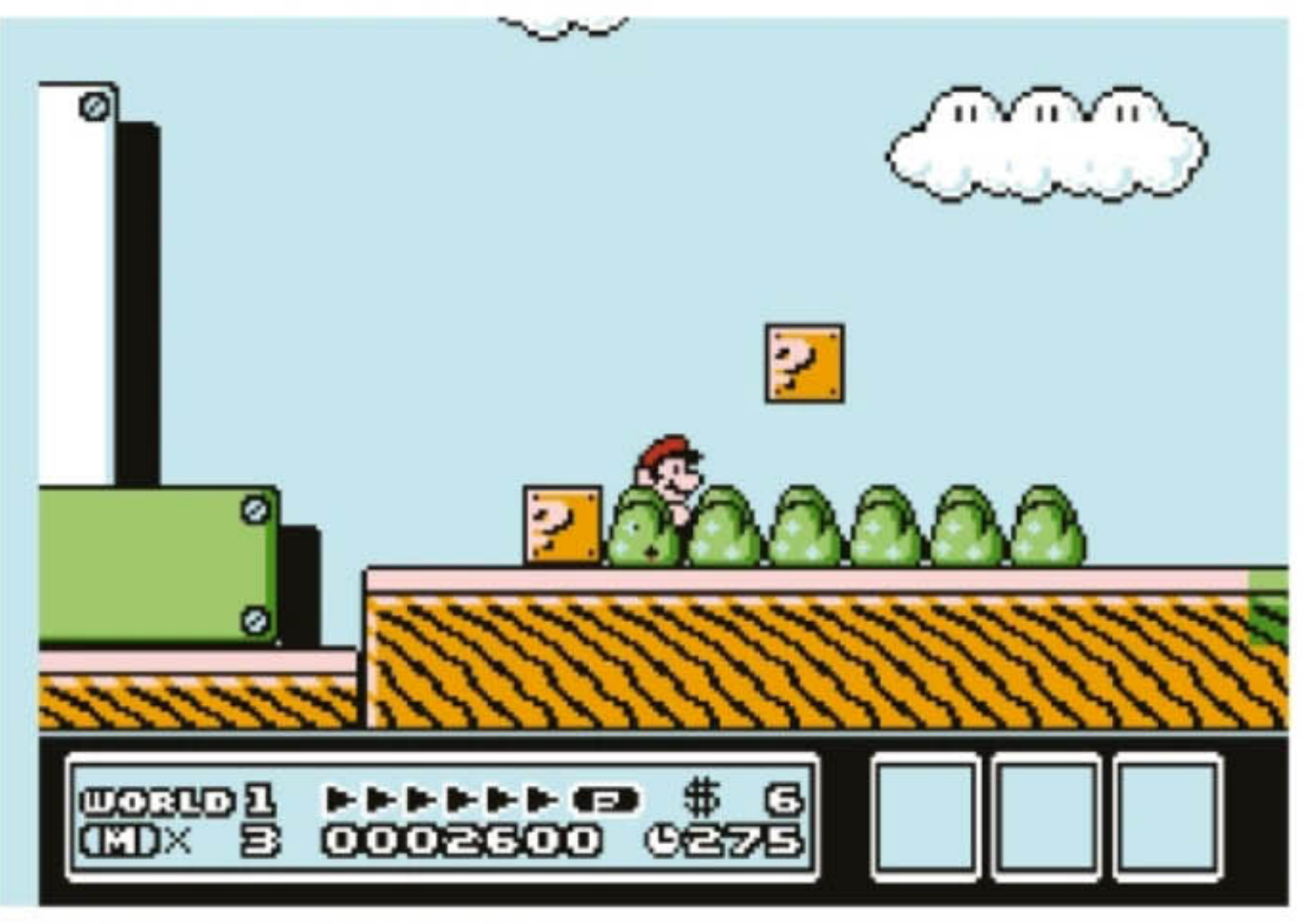
Memorable Moments

We present the best bits of the best NES game Nintendo ever made

Curtain Call

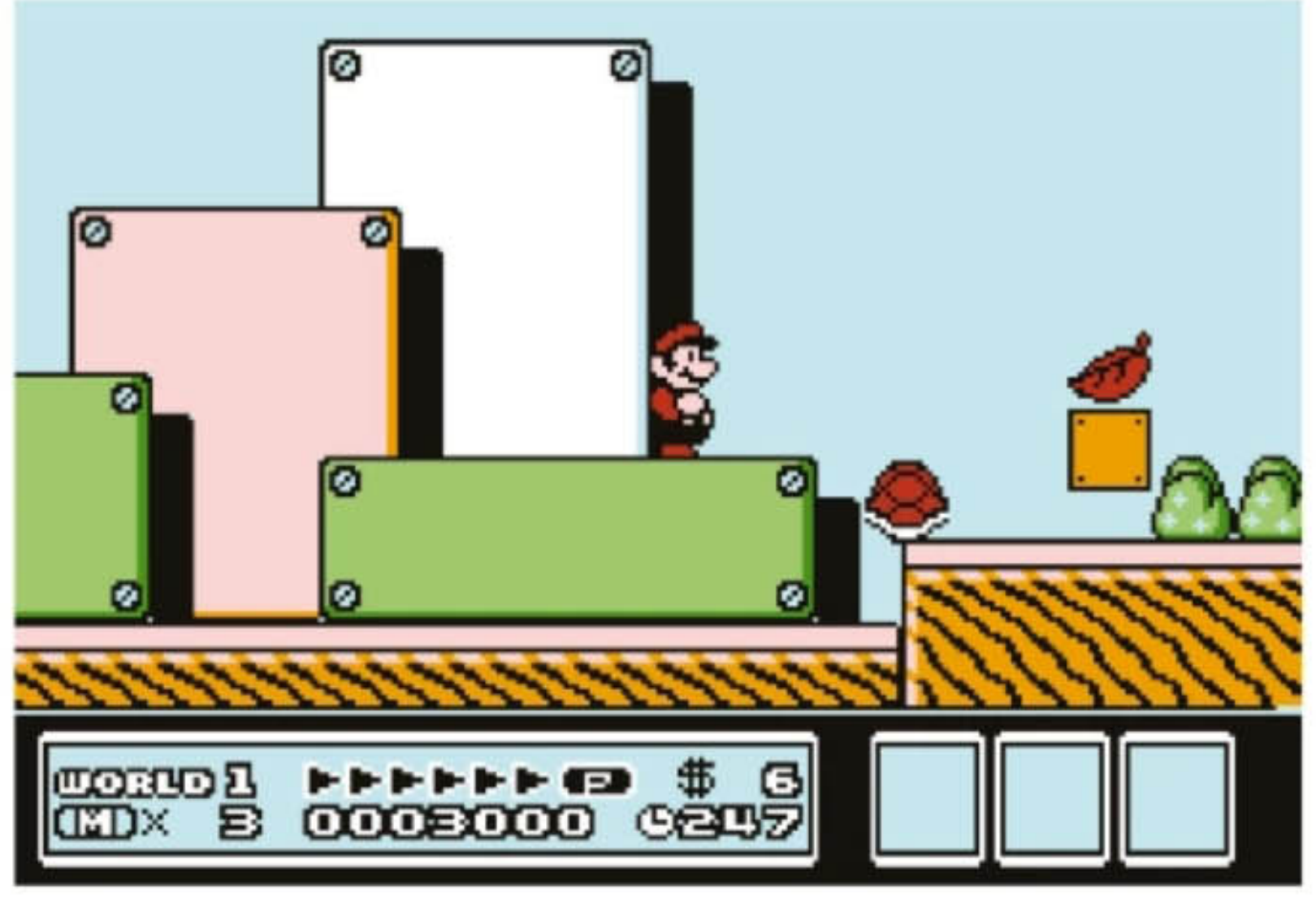
The intro to *Super Mario Bros 3* presents the entire game to the player as though it were a stage production, complete with spotlights and huge curtains. It's a weird premise that's never really explained, but it is one of the most memorable and iconic openings to any NES game.





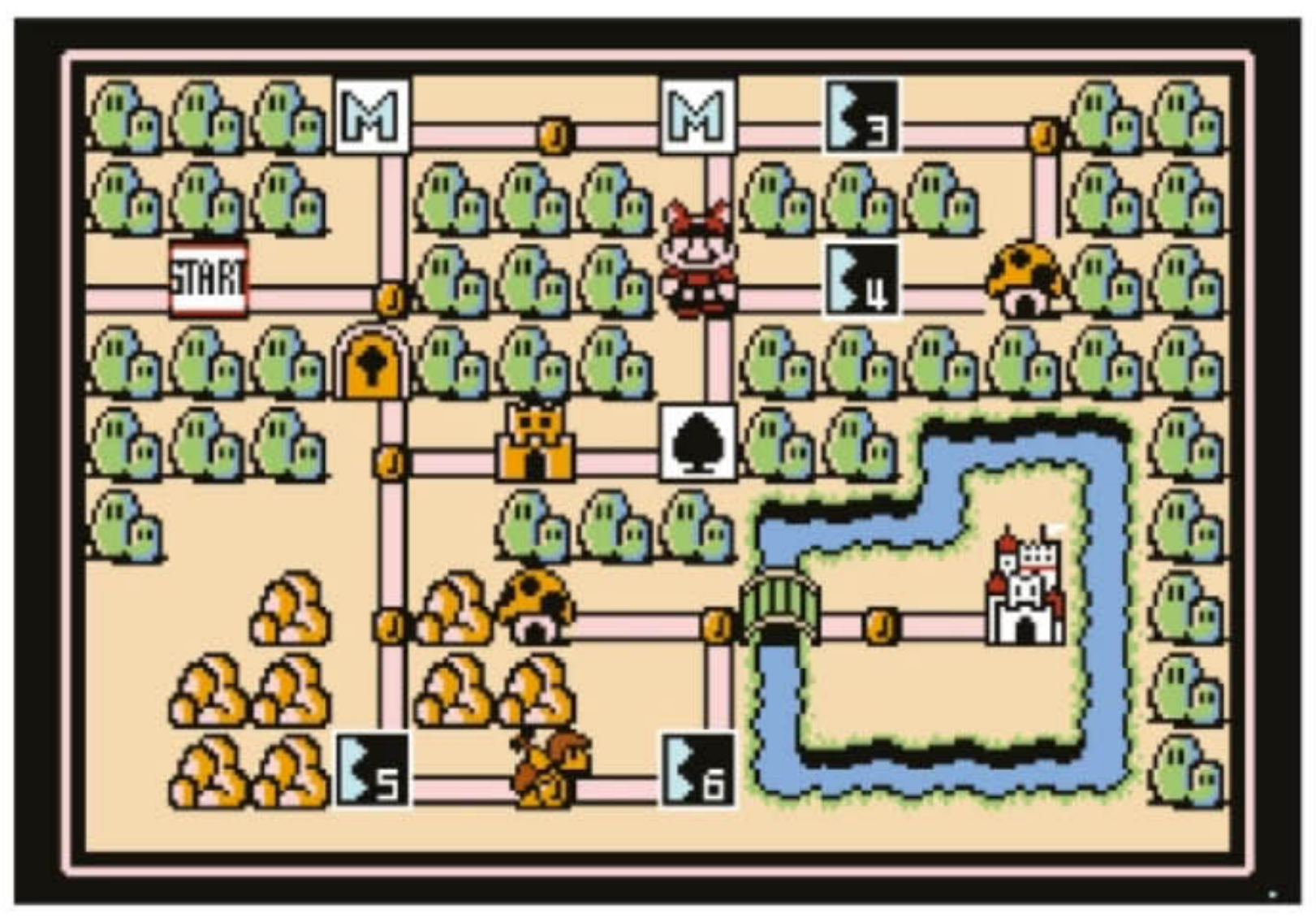
Hide And Seek

Crouch on any white block for a few seconds and Mario will fall off it and into the background layer of the stage. Sometimes it's just for fun; other times it can actually lead Mario to a very cool secret.



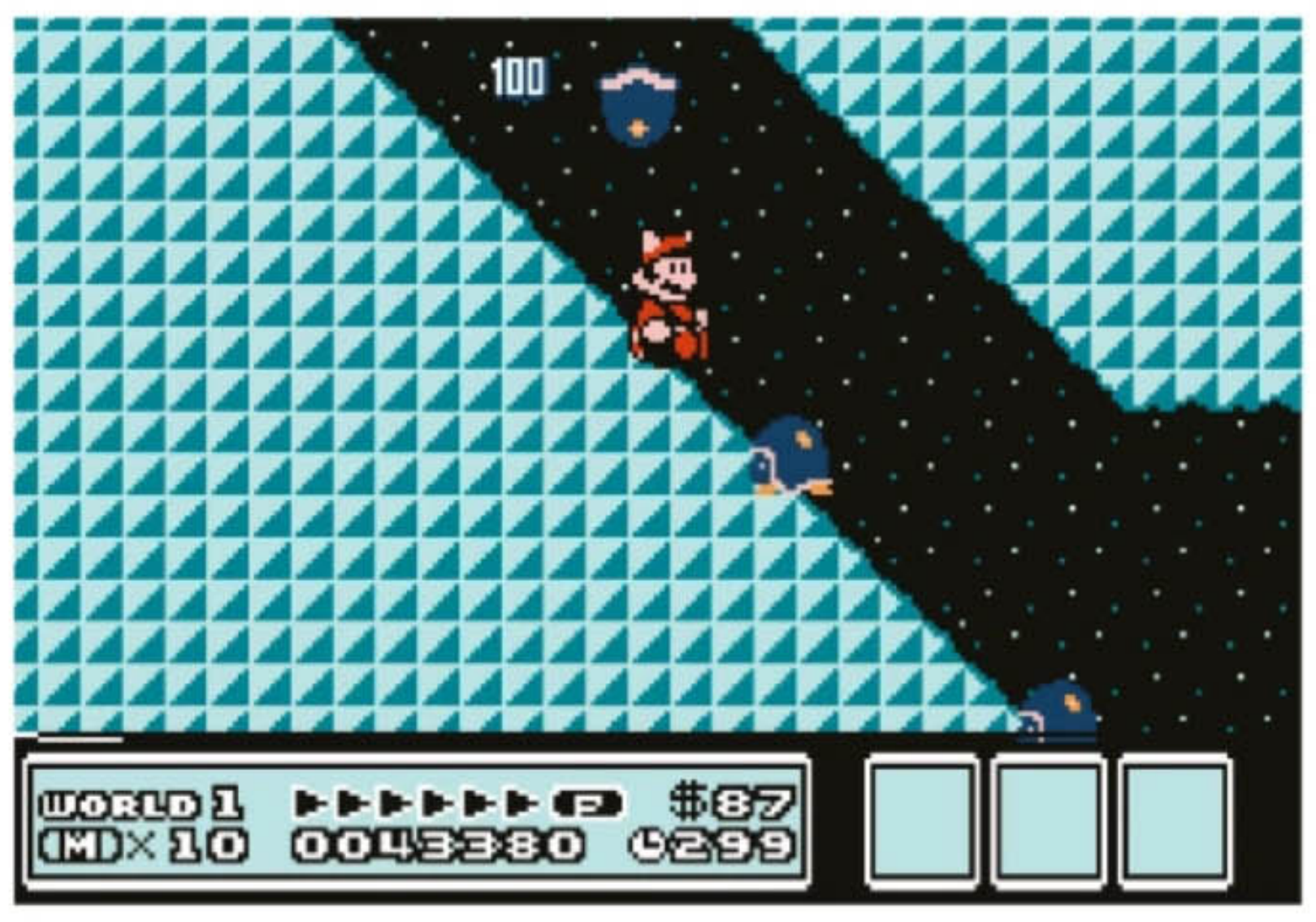
Question Blocked

A Question Block sits on the ground in the first stage, befuddling *Super Mario Bros* players who are only used to hitting the blocks from below. The solution: get a Koopa shell and throw it into the block. Genius.



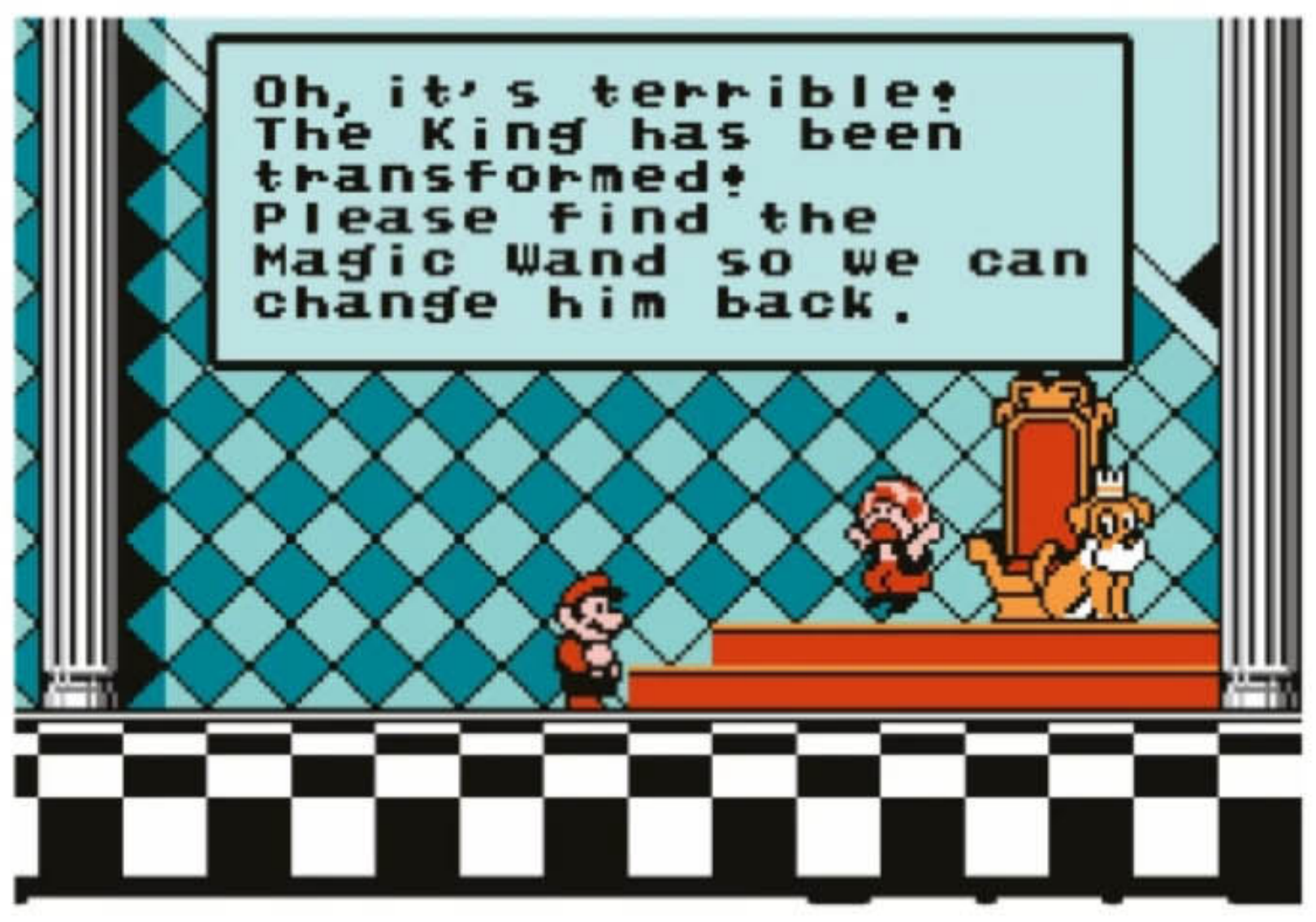
Non-Linear

Get to a certain point in the World 1 map screen and it suddenly dawns on you that there's now a significant element of choice in *Super Mario Bros 3*. Four different options are available at this first junction alone.



Bum Rush

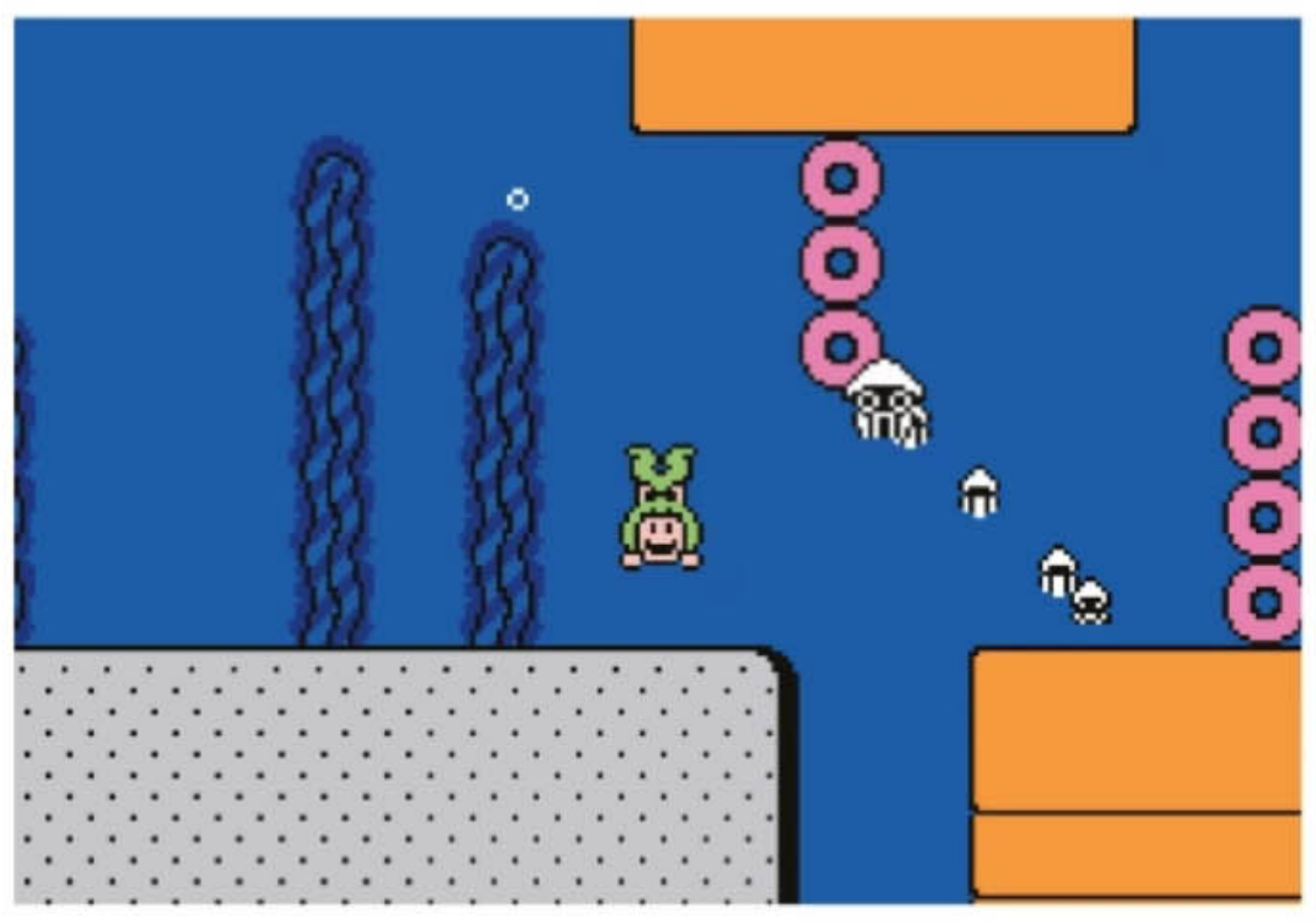
Pick up some speed and hold down on a slope like this and Mario will slide all the way down on his backside, taking out any enemies he hits during his descent. It's the sort of satisfying moment that *SMB3* does best.



Oh, it's terrible! The King has been transformed! Please find the Magic Wand so we can change him back.

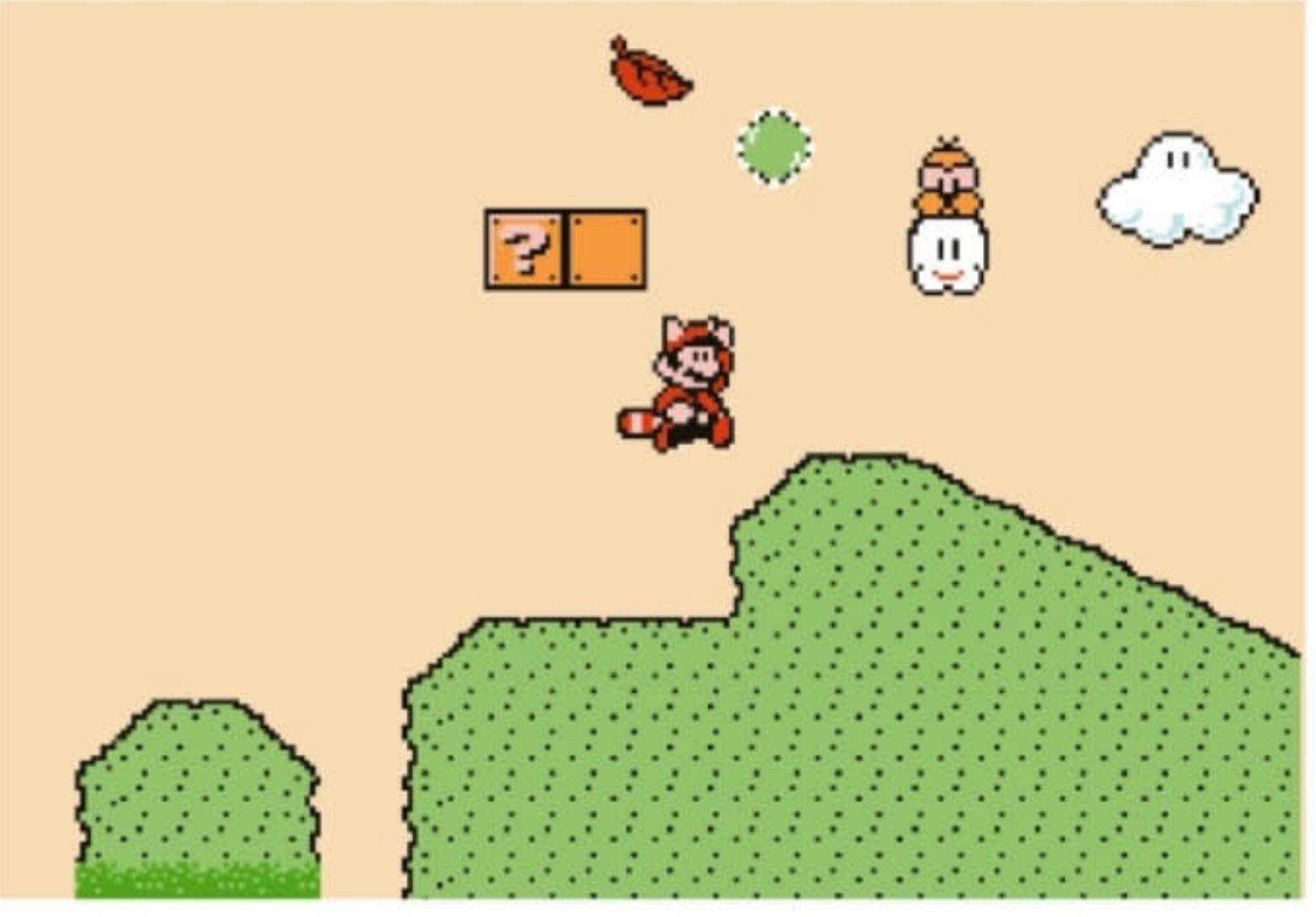
'King Idiot

Cut-scenes in a 2D *Mario* game? Can you believe it? These pre-boss battle scenes were pretty cool, though, always showing the King of the Mushroom Kingdom transformed into something humiliating.



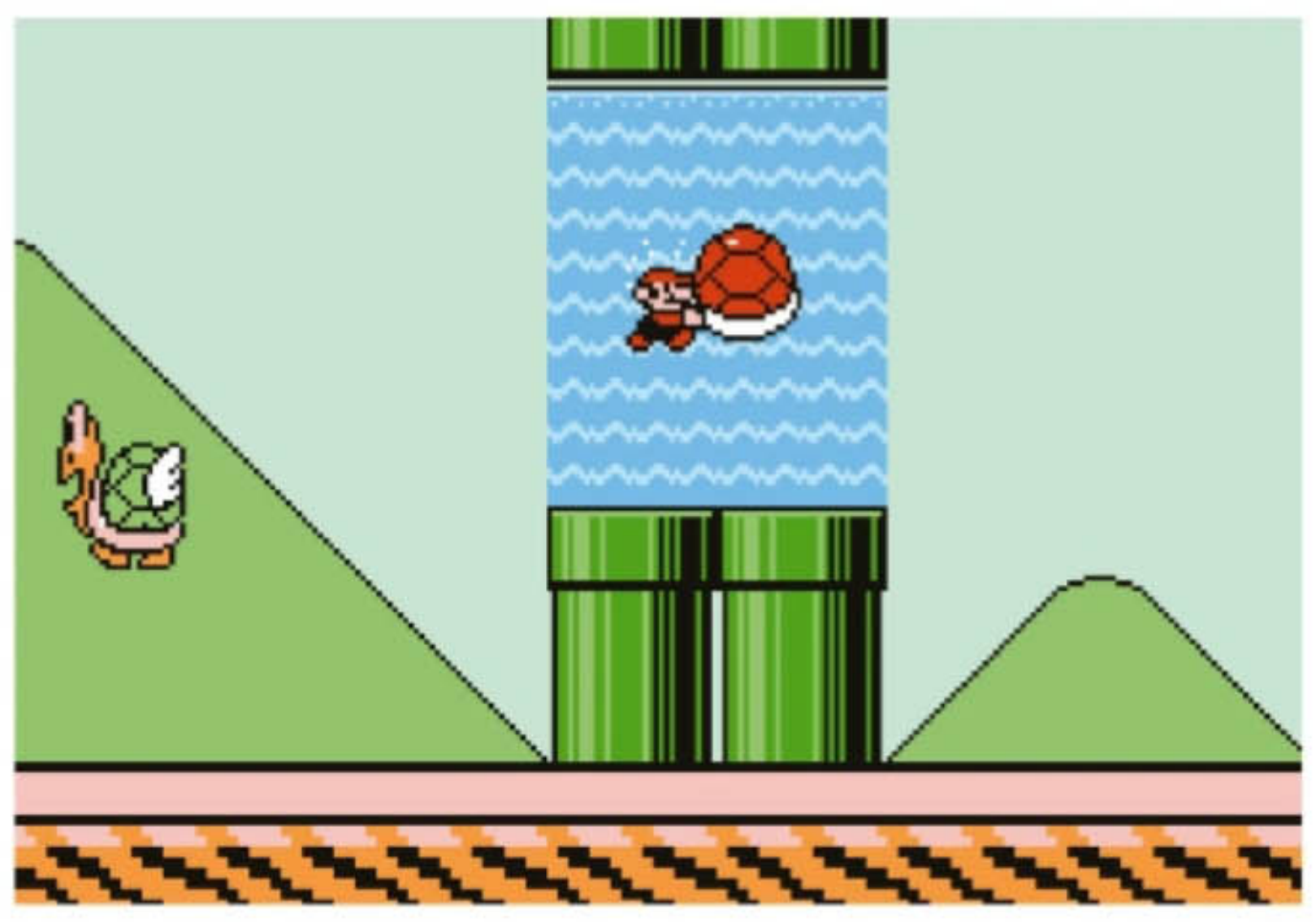
Hopping Mad

Super Mario Bros 3's Frog Suit is one of the most iconic power-ups of all time and was the stuff of legend back in the NES days. It felt so cool to mess around with, exploring underwater with fewer of the normal limitations.



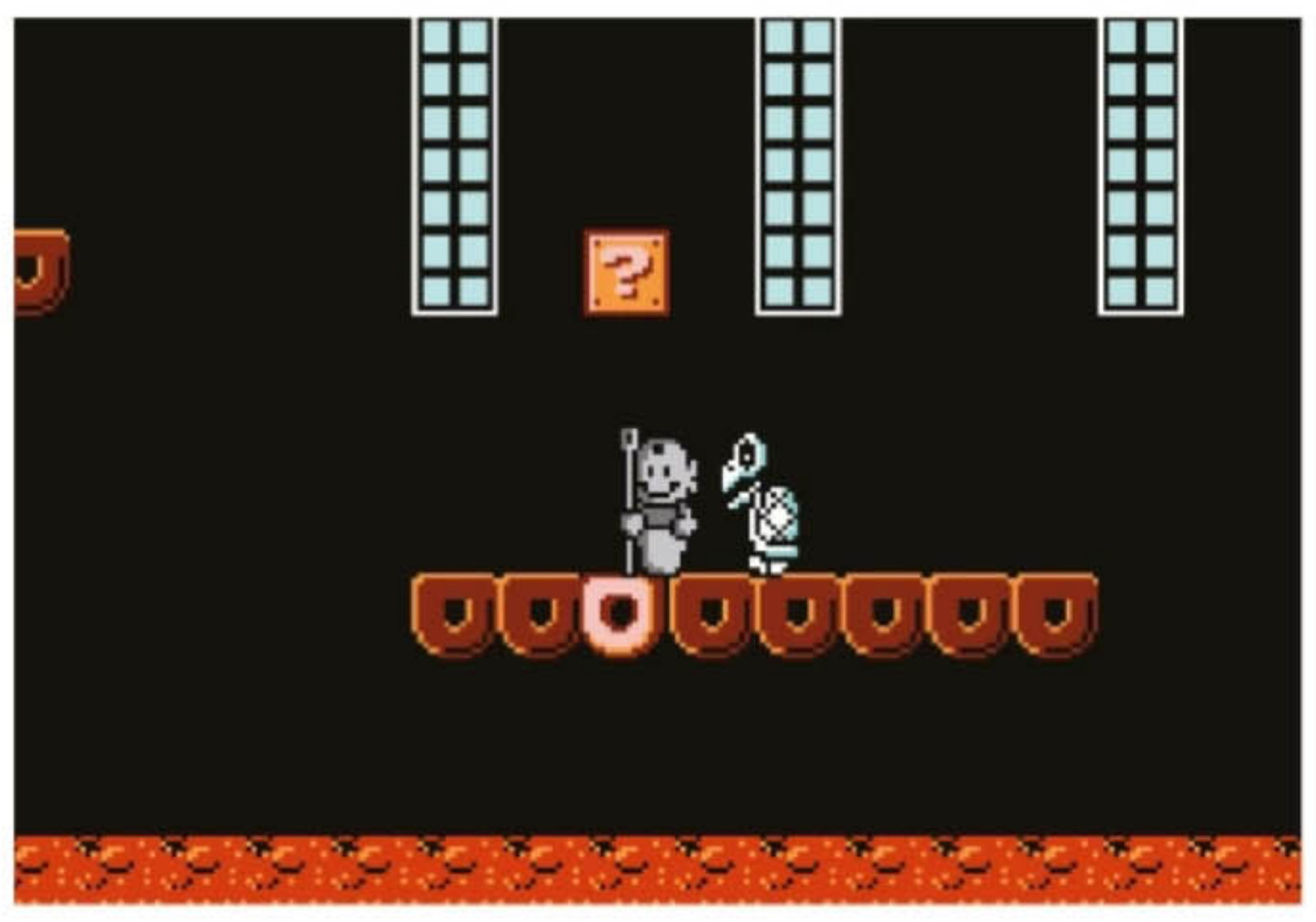
An Old Friend

Lakitu makes his return in *Super Mario Bros 3*, but we wouldn't call it a 'long-awaited' one. He's still an annoying little nuisance. His later relegation to cameraman and traffic light holder couldn't come soon enough.



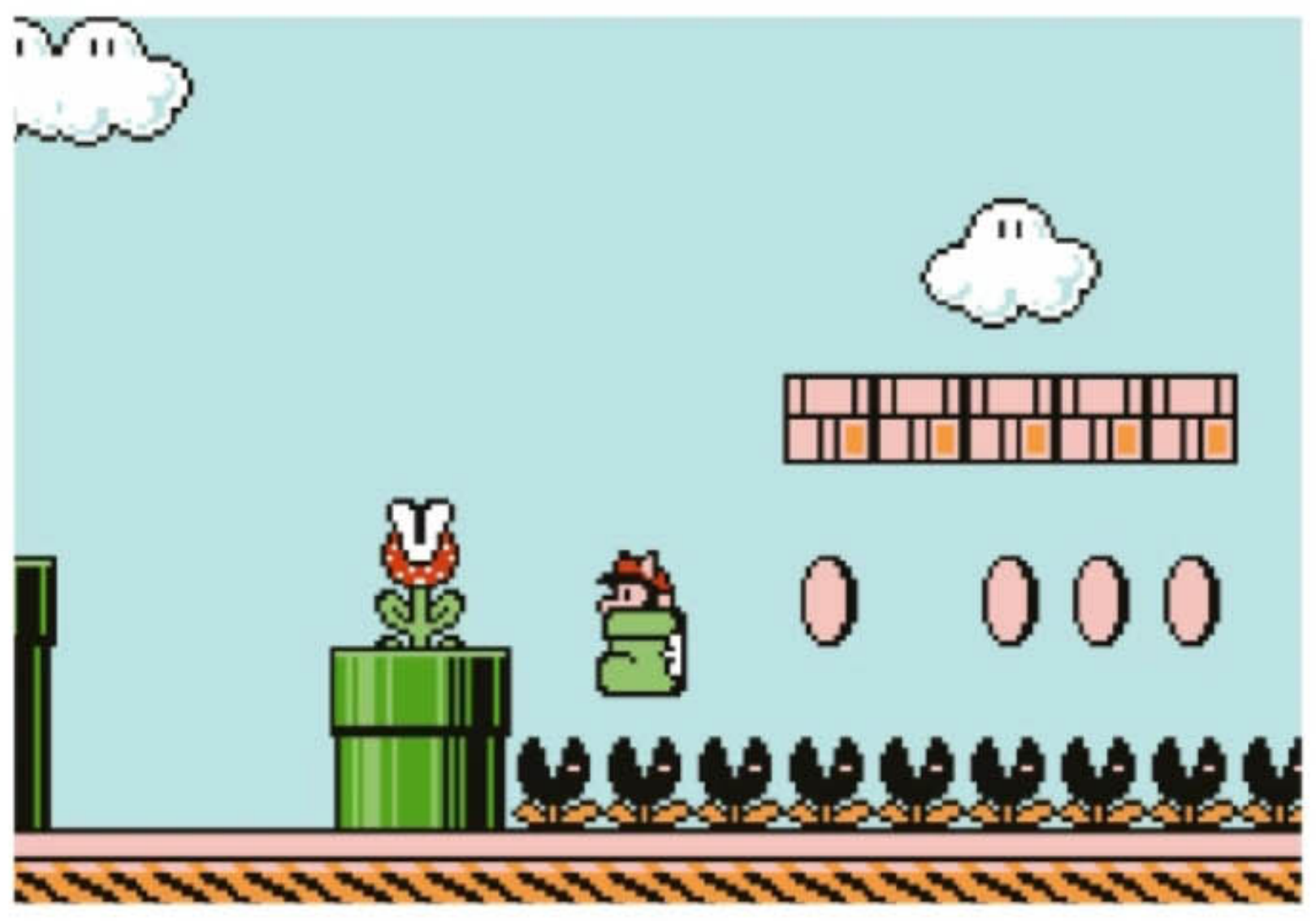
LittleBigMario

World 4's oversized level designs had a real wow factor in the NES days, even though they were really quite simple. The concept is so well-loved, though, that it was recently revived for *Super Mario Galaxy 2*.



Statue Mario

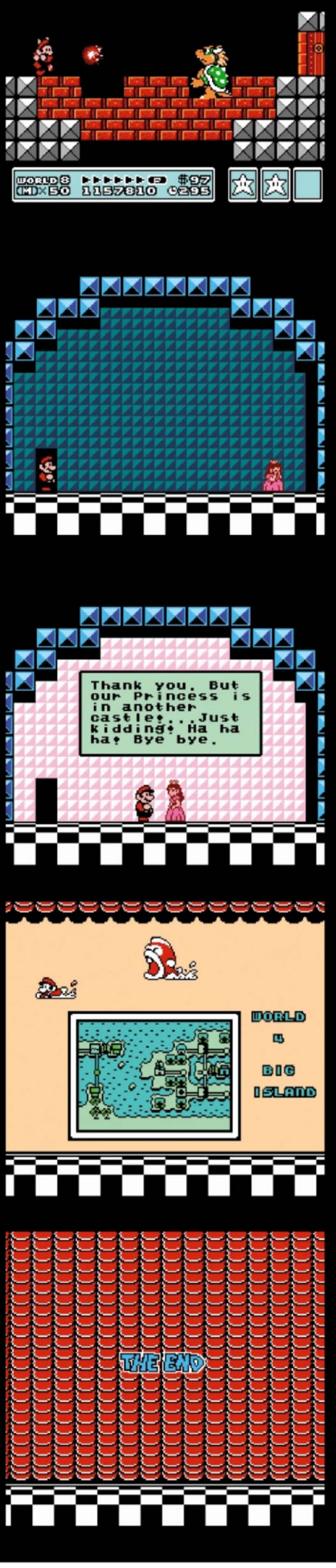
The Tanooki Suit is an enhanced form of Raccoon Mario that gives him fur all over in addition to the ears and the tail. Hold down and B while wearing the suit and Mario will turn into a statue, making him invincible.



Suited And Booted

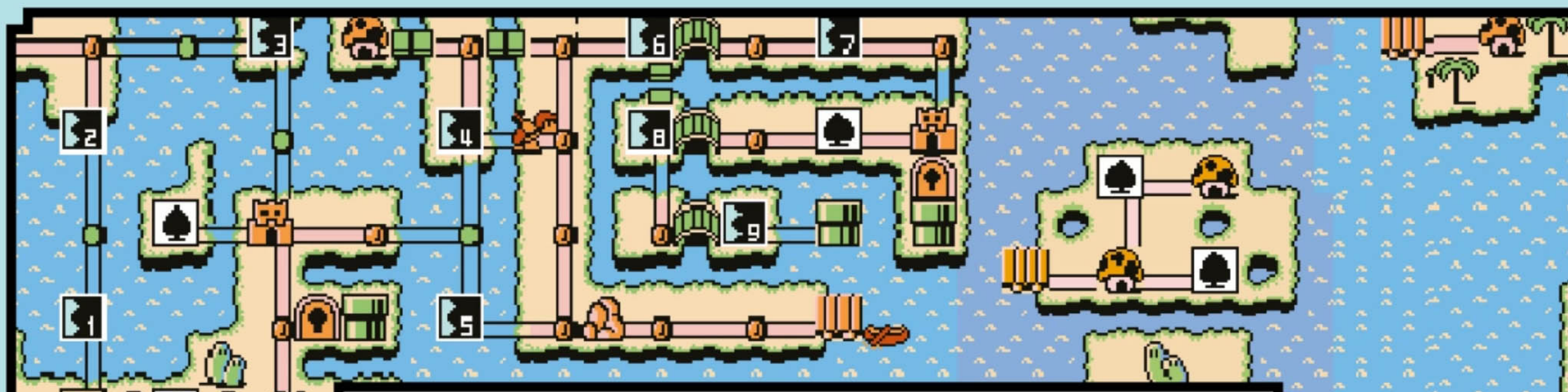
The Kuribo Shoe is probably the rarest item in *Super Mario Bros 3*, only appearing in a couple of levels. It also has to be one of the weirdest power-ups in a *Mario* game. Do you think there's an old woman and her family in there too?

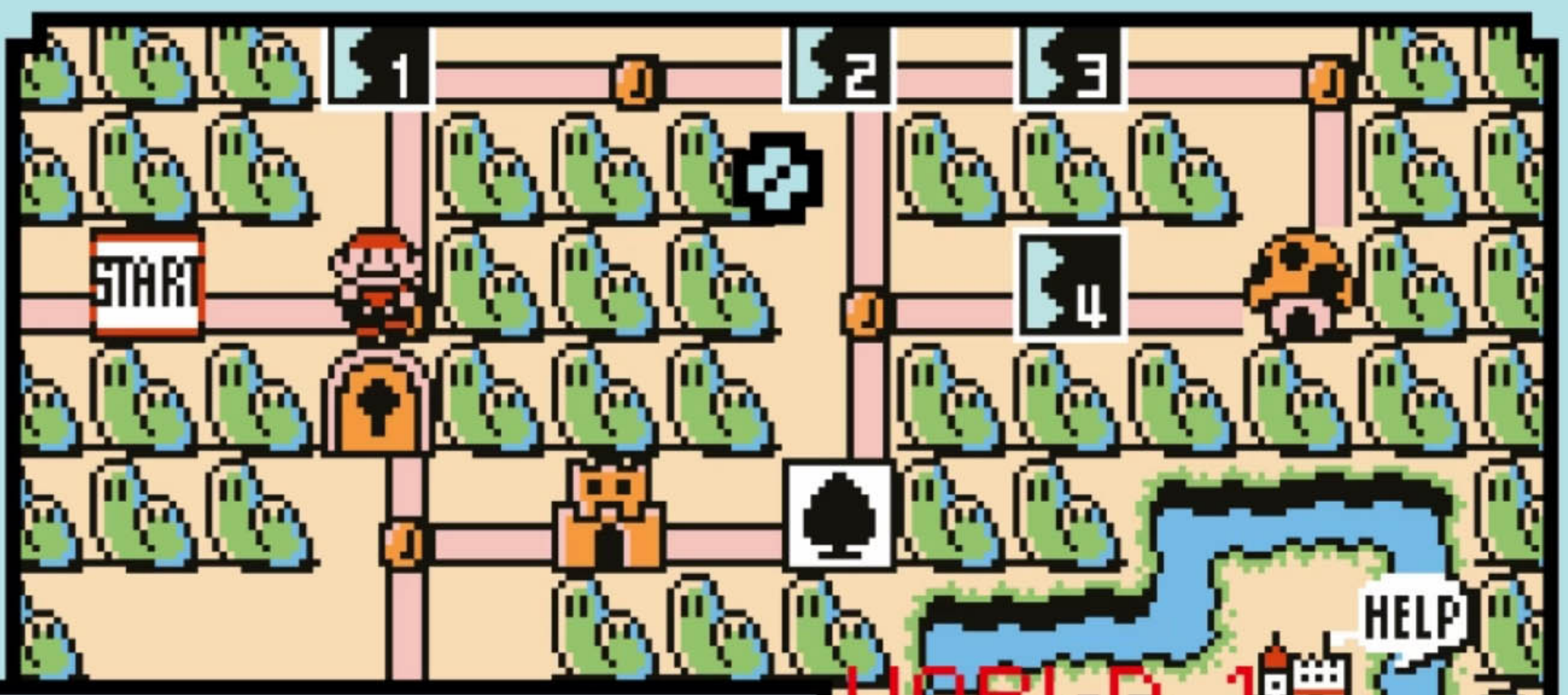
The ending to Super Mario Bros 3 isn't without its sense of humour, as Princess Peach demonstrates. Cheeky bugger!


Thank you. But our Princess is in another castle!...Just kidding! Ha ha ha! Bye bye.

World Tour

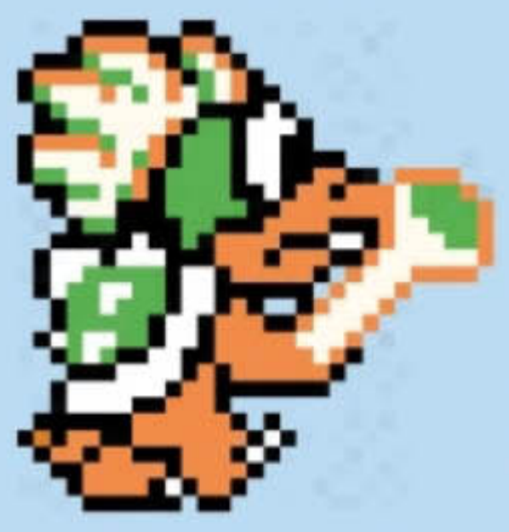
The Mushroom Kingdom has been represented in many different ways throughout *Mario* history, but *Super Mario Bros 3* was the first time it was presented in so much detail. Here's how it stacked up, from interactive map screens to the levels themselves and their climactic boss battles.





WORLD 1

World 1 eases the player in gently, the opening level featuring zero hazards and only a couple of fairly docile enemies, but the threats quickly escalate. Before the world is through you'll have contended with slippery ice slopes toward oblivion, an assault from the pesky Boomerang Bros, and a madcap dash through an airship as cannonballs shoot at you from all directions. Phew!

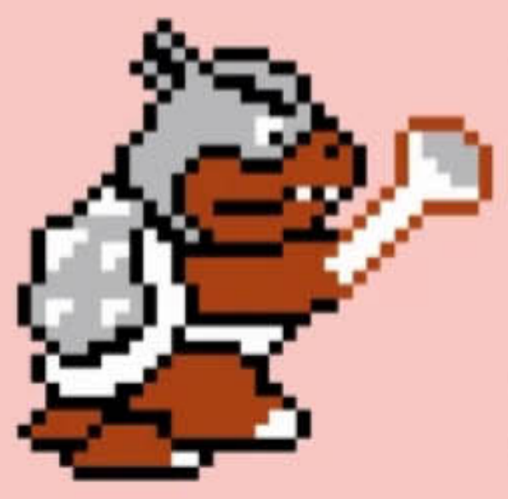


BOSS: Iggy

One of Bowser's seven children known as the Koopalings, Iggy is named after real-life rocker Iggy Pop. But that's not a microphone in his hand: it's a deadly magic wand that he wants to shoot at Mario. Thankfully, he's quite easy to dodge and, a trio of head stomps later, he'll be out of the game.

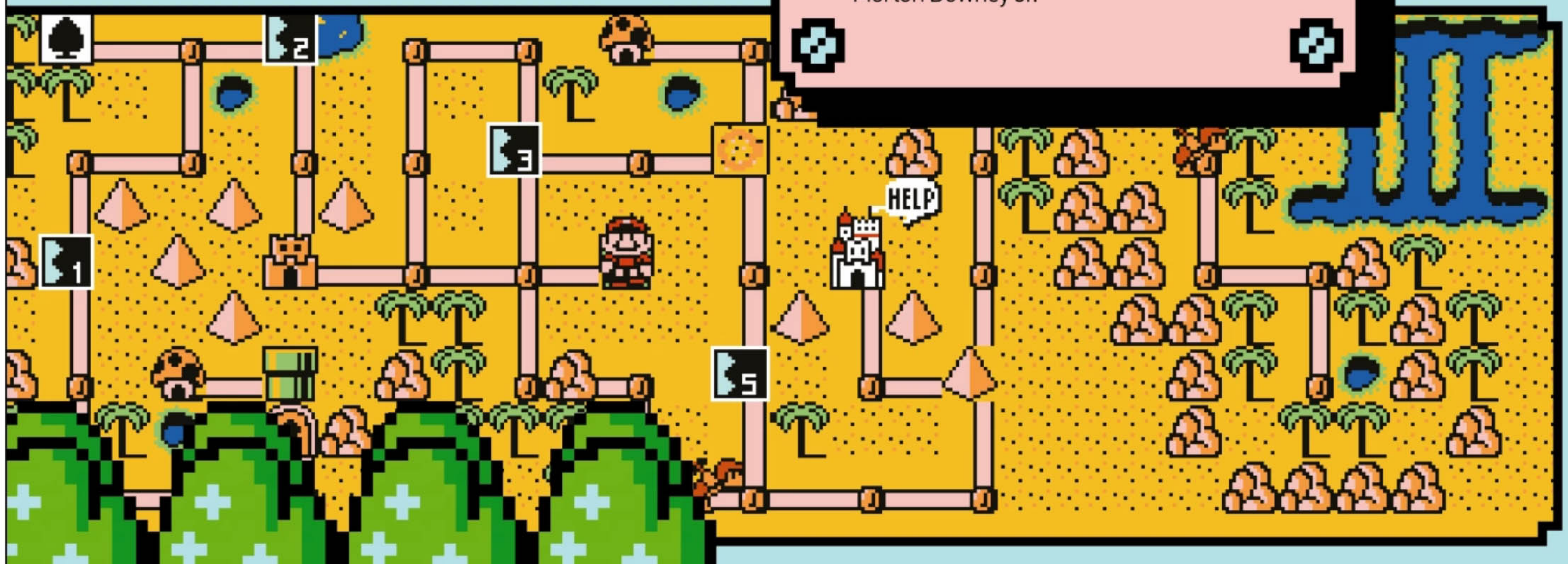
WORLD 2

World 2's desert landscapes throw some truly unexpected enemies at you, including a teeny tiny Goomba that hides underneath blocks of sand. One level introduces the now-customary Boo enemy, a ghost that will stop pursuing you as long as you look it in the eye. And in another stage you're even attacked by the sun itself. Weird.



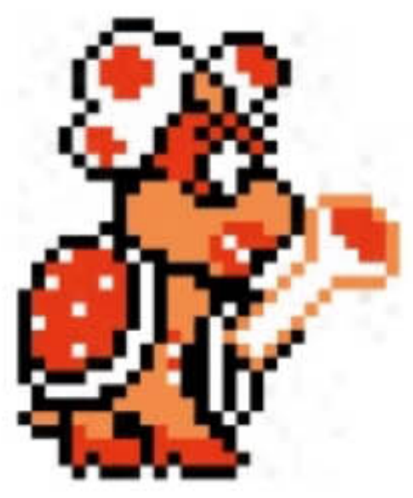
BOSS: Morton

Not that much more troubling than his brother Iggy, Morton also wields a wand but is able to throw out multiple bouncing projectiles at once. Also named after a real-life musician, he takes his name from American singer and talk show host Morton Downey Jr.



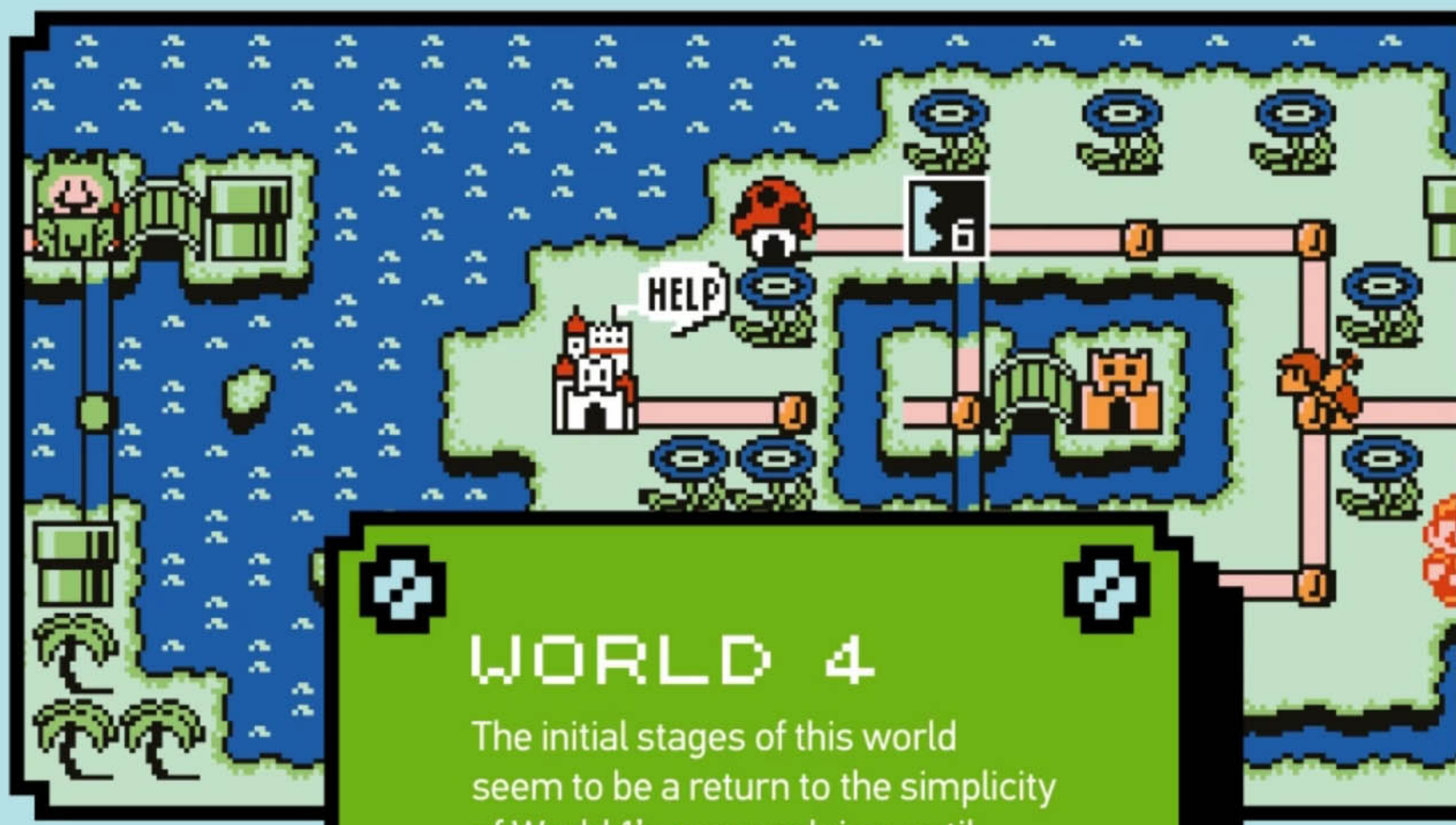
WORLD 3

The third world is almost entirely made up of water-based levels, always some of the trickiest stages in *Mario* games, especially when there's a giant fish leaping out of the depths in an attempt to swallow him whole. Thankfully, however, our hero has a new trick up his sleeve in the form of the Frog Suit, which grants him enhanced swimming and jumping abilities.



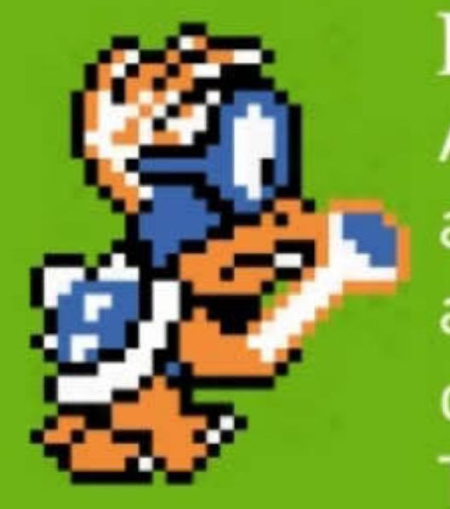
BOSS: Wendy

Bowser's only daughter awaits Mario at the end of World 3, and she's no princess, let us tell you. Like her brothers, her weapon of choice is a wand, and this one fires what look like life rings. Wendy is named after Wendy O Williams, lead singer of punk outfit The Plasmatics.



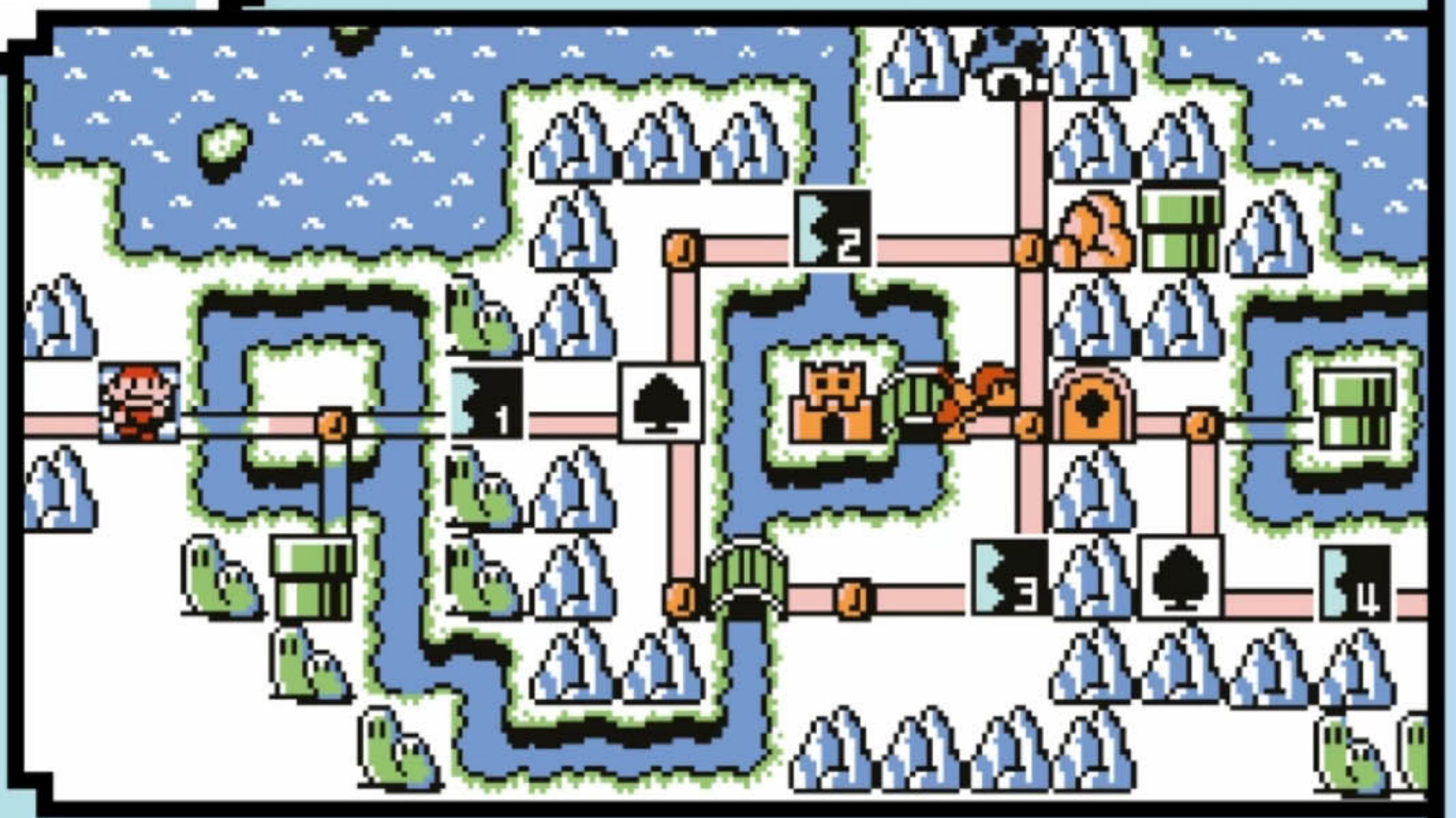
WORLD 4

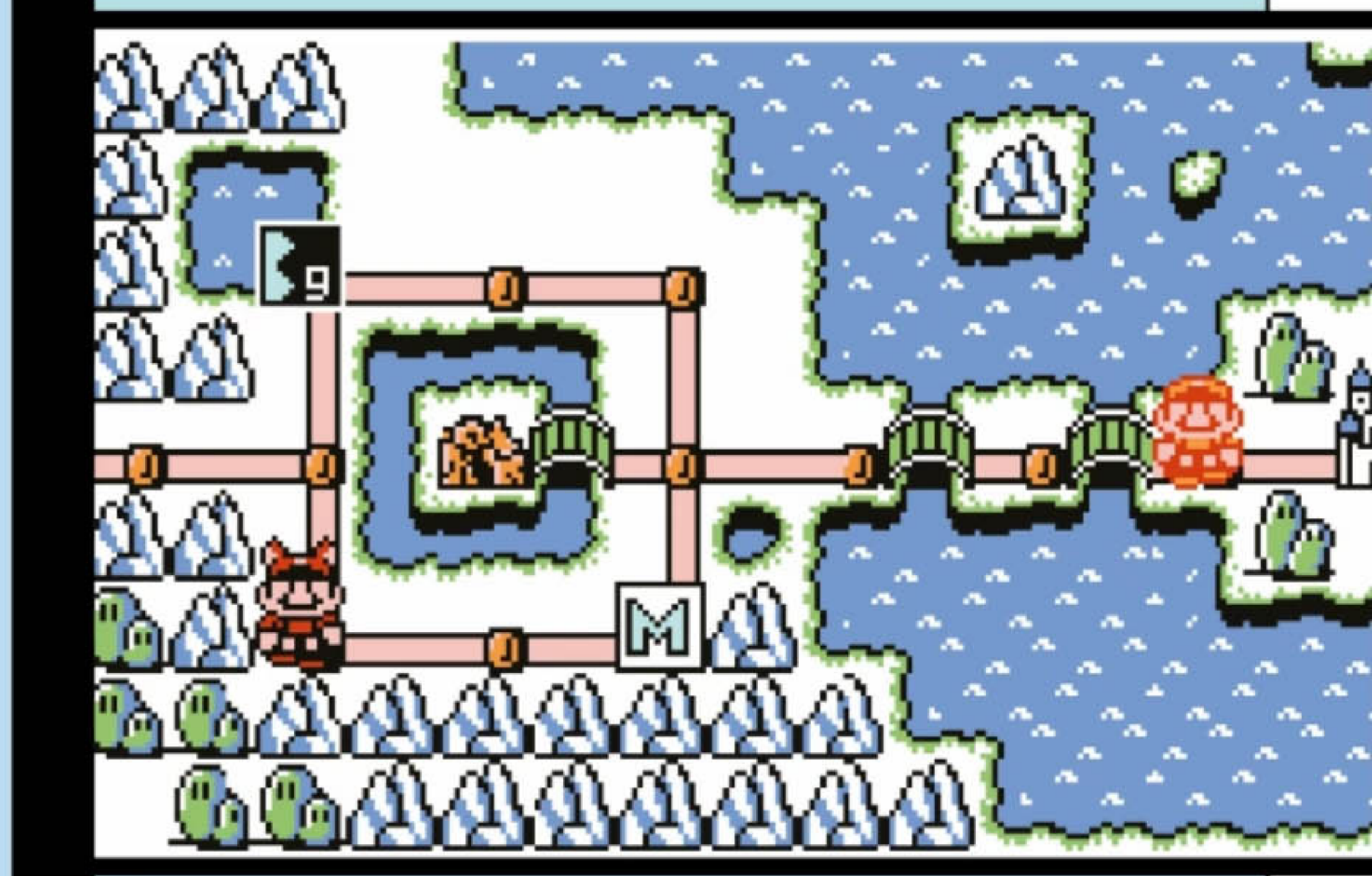
The initial stages of this world seem to be a return to the simplicity of World 1's grassy plains, until you see the enemies, who are now several times bigger than ever before. Thankfully, however, lots of other things have grown in size, including the clouds, which are now big enough for Mario to safely jump onto.



BOSS: Larry

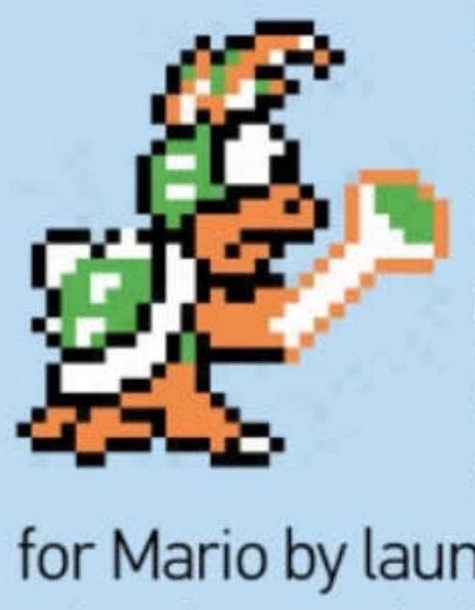
Another boss, another Koopaling, another boring old magic wand. There's not much challenge here, but World 4 itself is tough enough that you'll welcome the downtime. Larry is the only Koopaling not to be named after a musician. Instead, he's named after talk show host Larry King.





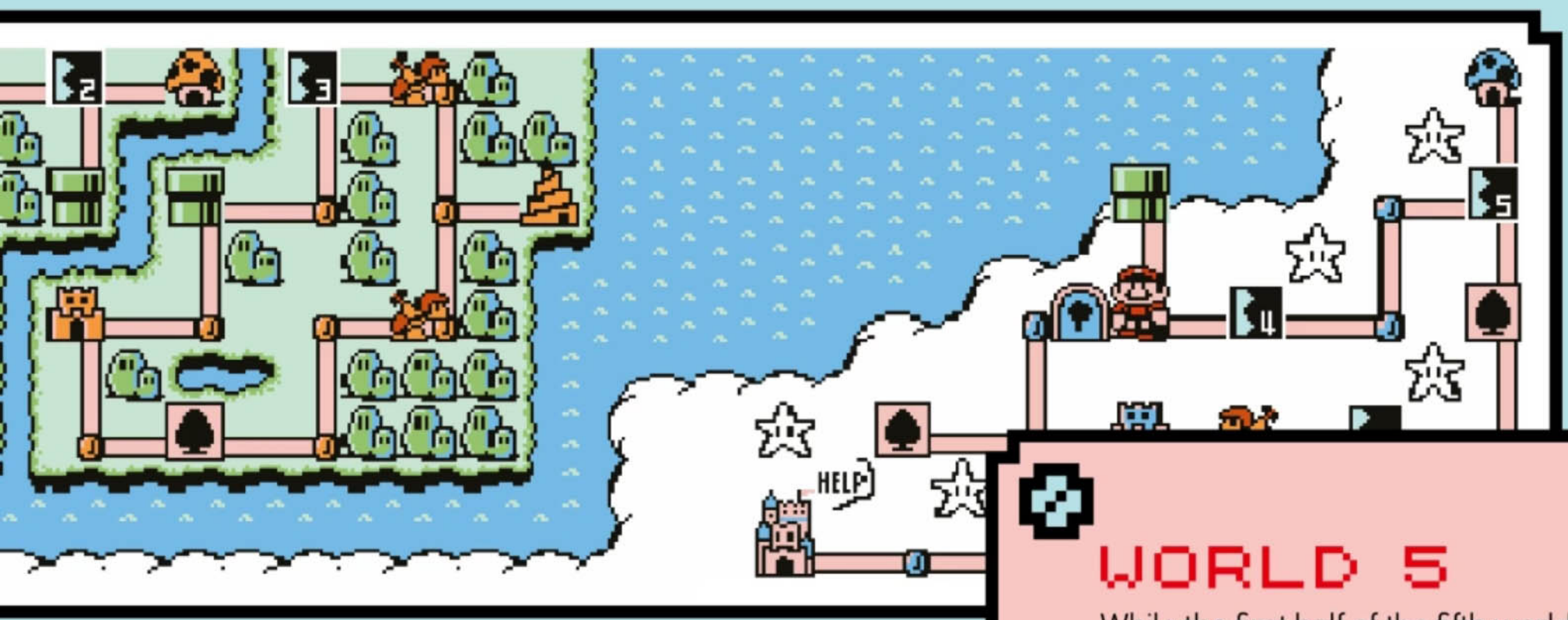
WORLD 6

World 6 is where things really start to get tough. Icy surfaces, spiked floors and multiple enemy types all crowded into the screen make it very easy for Mario to meet his demise if you don't keep precise control over him at all times. Prepare to use a fair few continues in this world.



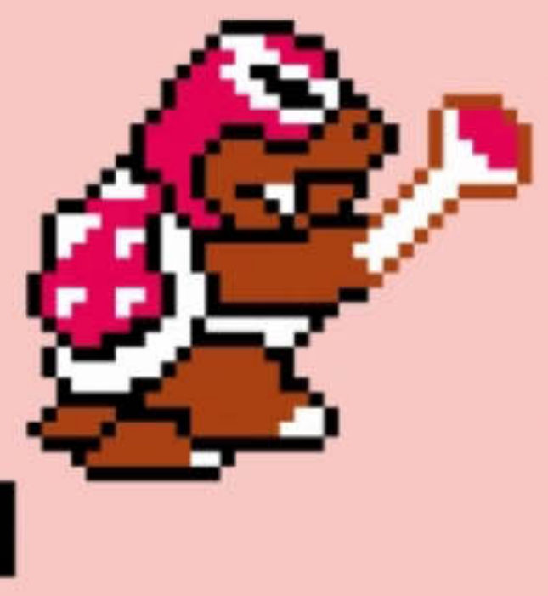
BOSS: Lemmy

Riding around on a huge rubber ball, Lemmy causes trouble for Mario by launching several other bouncy balls at him. It's utter chaos and pretty difficult to get through in one piece. We'll forgive Lemmy, though, simply because he's named after the legendary lead singer of UK metallers Motörhead.



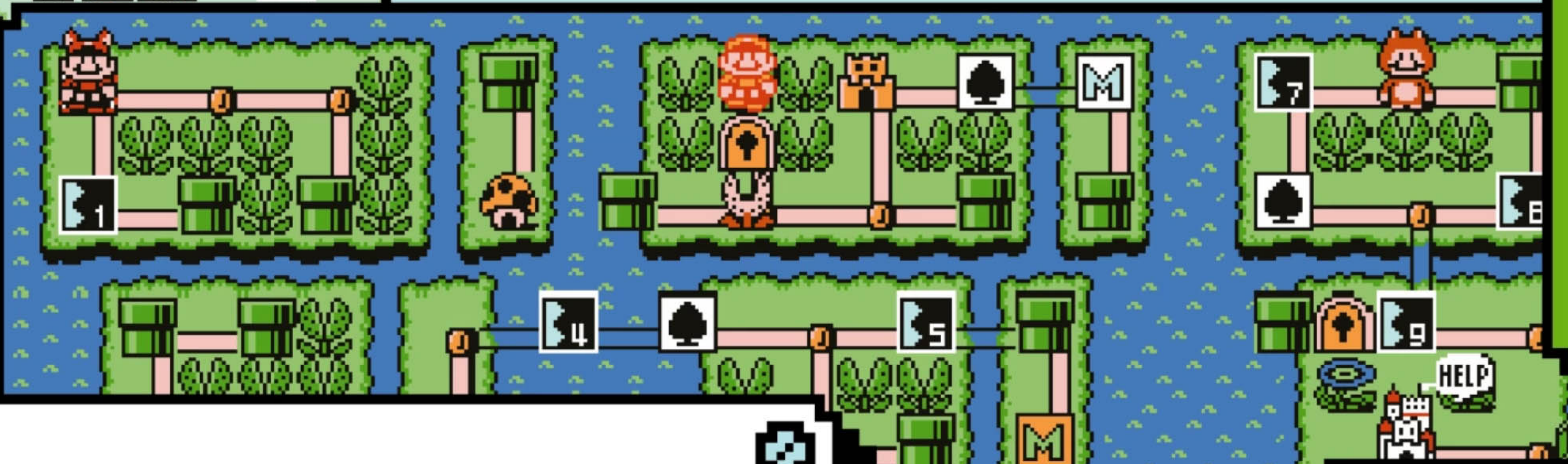
WORLD 5

While the first half of the fifth world takes place in familiar grassland territory, the second half sends Mario up into the air to explore the clouds. Being so high up, however, means only one thing: lots and lots of bottomless pits to fall into.



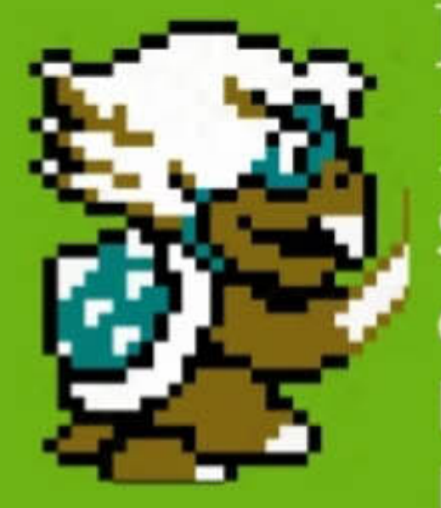
BOSS: Roy

One of the most dangerous of the Koopalings, Roy is able to stomp on the ground, sending out shockwaves that stun Mario into submission for a few seconds. Best to stay in the air, then. He's named after Roy Orbison. Of course.



WORLD 7

The penultimate world takes Mario back to his roots, with entire levels constructed from pipes. A double-edged sword: some pipes lead to beneficial secret areas while others simply house annoying enemies. Tread carefully, Mario.

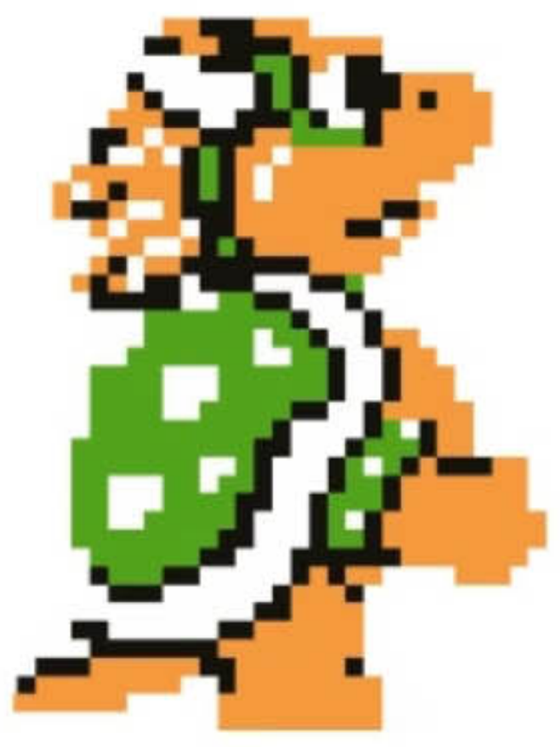


BOSS: Ludwig

Second in command to Bowser himself, Ludwig is so heavy that every footstep is as powerful as Morton's stomps. He's named after Ludwig Van Beethoven, which was a source of amusement in the Mario cartoons as he tried and failed to compose pleasant classical music.

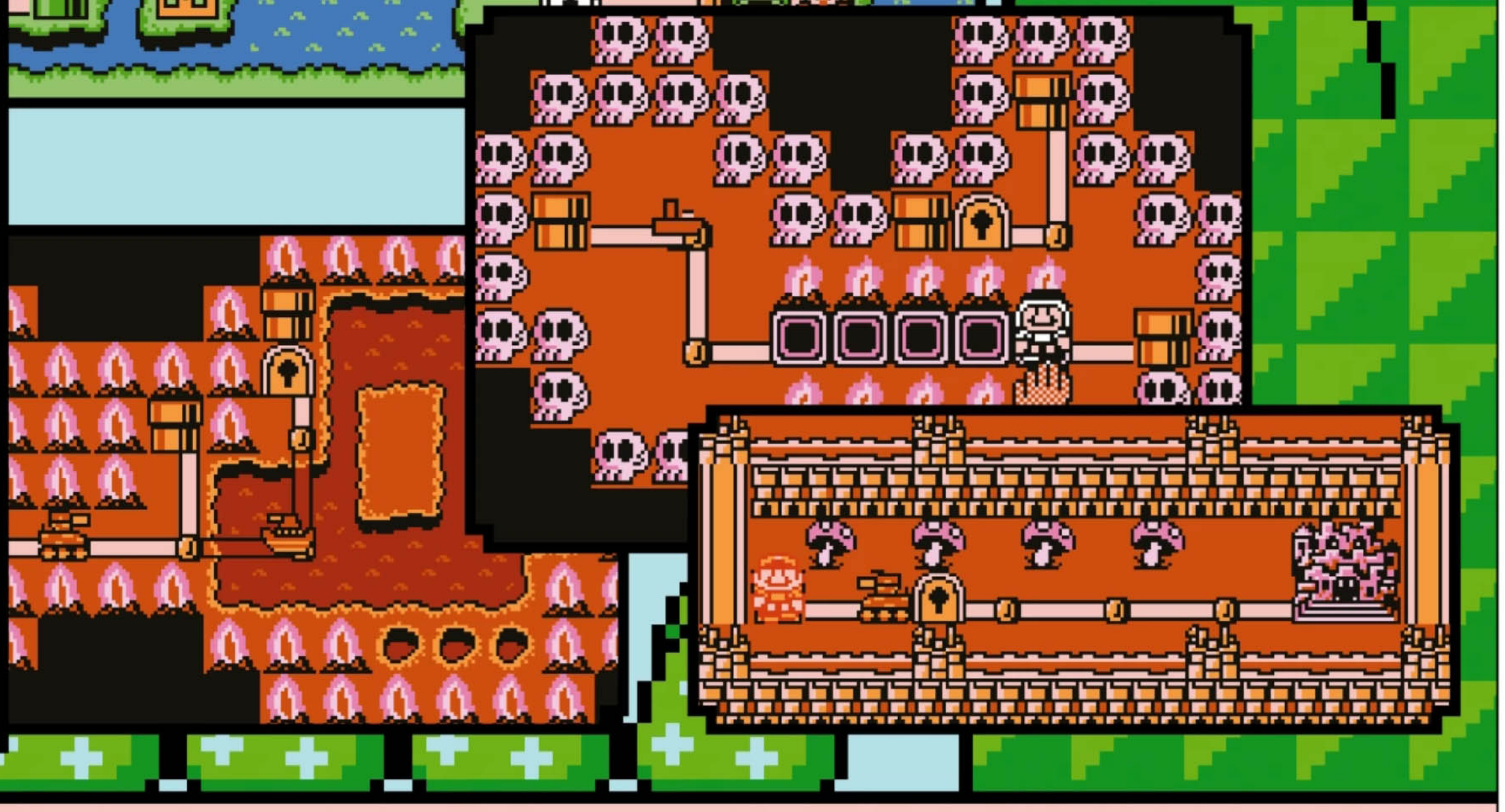
WORLD 8

Anyone who used Warp Whistles to cheat their way to the final world soon found that their skills were nowhere near up to the challenge, as Bowser's army attacks Mario with a mile-long caravan of gigantic tanks. This level, and the handful that followed, are some of the hardest in Mario's history.



BOSS: Bowser

King Koopa himself awaits Mario at the end of World 8, and he's suitably tough to beat. You can't actually hurt him, so dodge his fireballs and try to get him to stomp in the middle of the stage. If he does it enough he'll break the floor and fall into the lava below.



When evil scientist Dr Wily plots to take over the world using an army of colourful robots, there's only one man blue and mega enough to put a stop to his nefarious plan. Stuart Hunt pops on a blue bike helmet, dusts off his beloved NES and boots up Mega Man 2

IN THE KNOW

MEGA MAN II
▶ NORMAL
DIFFICULT

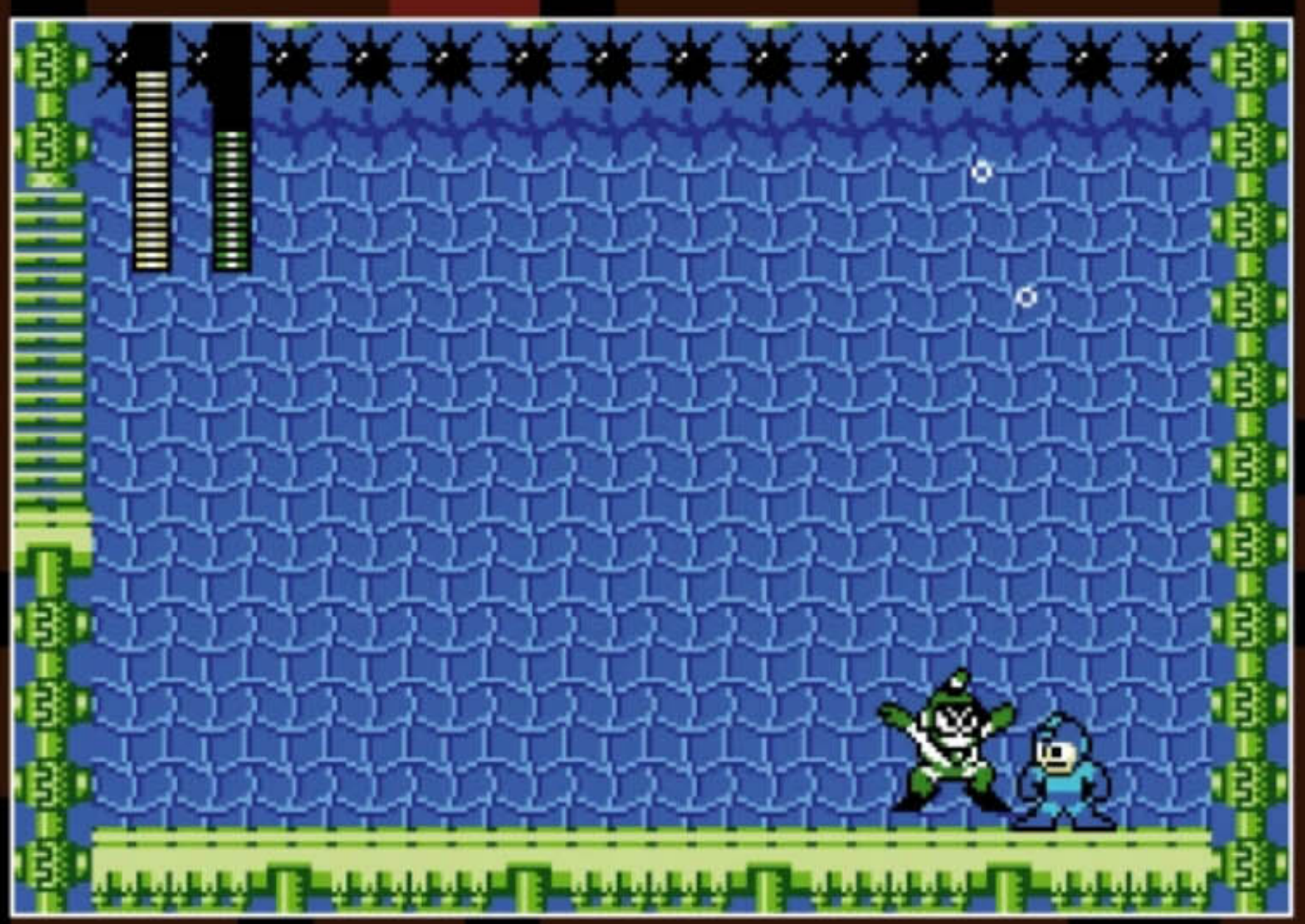
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM

CAPCOM
MEGA MAN 2

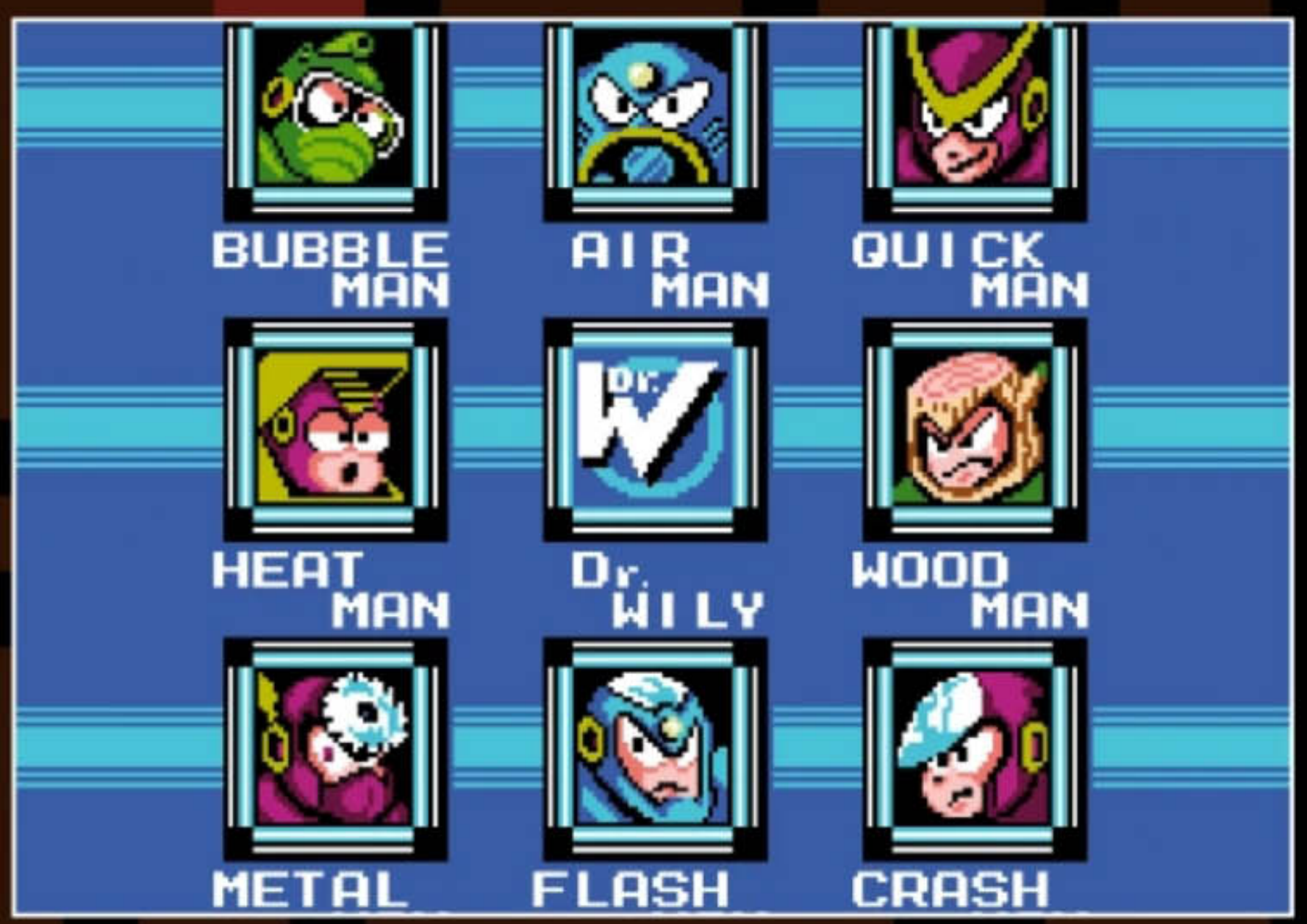
Mega Man – he's an invention, built from machine parts by an old guy in a laboratory. He's the videogame equivalent of Pinocchio, but with the difference being that the puppet's rubbish in comparison to Capcom's titular hero. Why? Because the dummy is wooden, has a nose that prevents him from cheating on his marionette girlfriend and has a cockney, top-hat-wearing cricket for a friend. Now Mega Man, on the other hand, is a cool shade of ice-blue with overtly chunky shins, has a laser cannon where a hand lives, and boasts so much bravado he somehow manages to persuade a robotic dog to be his friend. He also goes by more than one name (Rockman, in Japan) and shifted shedloads of NES cartridges on his first videogame outing, despite them being wrapped in an artwork that baulked at his boyish demeanour and then re-imaged him as a 40-year-old virgin wearing a yellow tracksuit and looking mildly derivative with a handgun.

Since then, it's safe to say all has not been well in Mega Man's world. The motherboard hit the fan in 200X, while Megs was standing aloft a skyscraper one starry night. Was he going to jump and end it there… who can tell? Well, after the arduous mission that was *Mega Man*, perhaps the prospect of being recalled to one day face off against frustratingly hard-going gameplay and practically impossible bosses had taken its emotional toll. But then he hears a rumbling from an army of new robot nastiness forged by his old foe and megalomaniac old duffer, Dr Wily, and a new contract is rather hastily drawn up. The agreement is that Mega Man will return if Capcom agrees to include some kind of save system into the game and someone who has an actual vested interest in videogames gets to design the game's boxart.

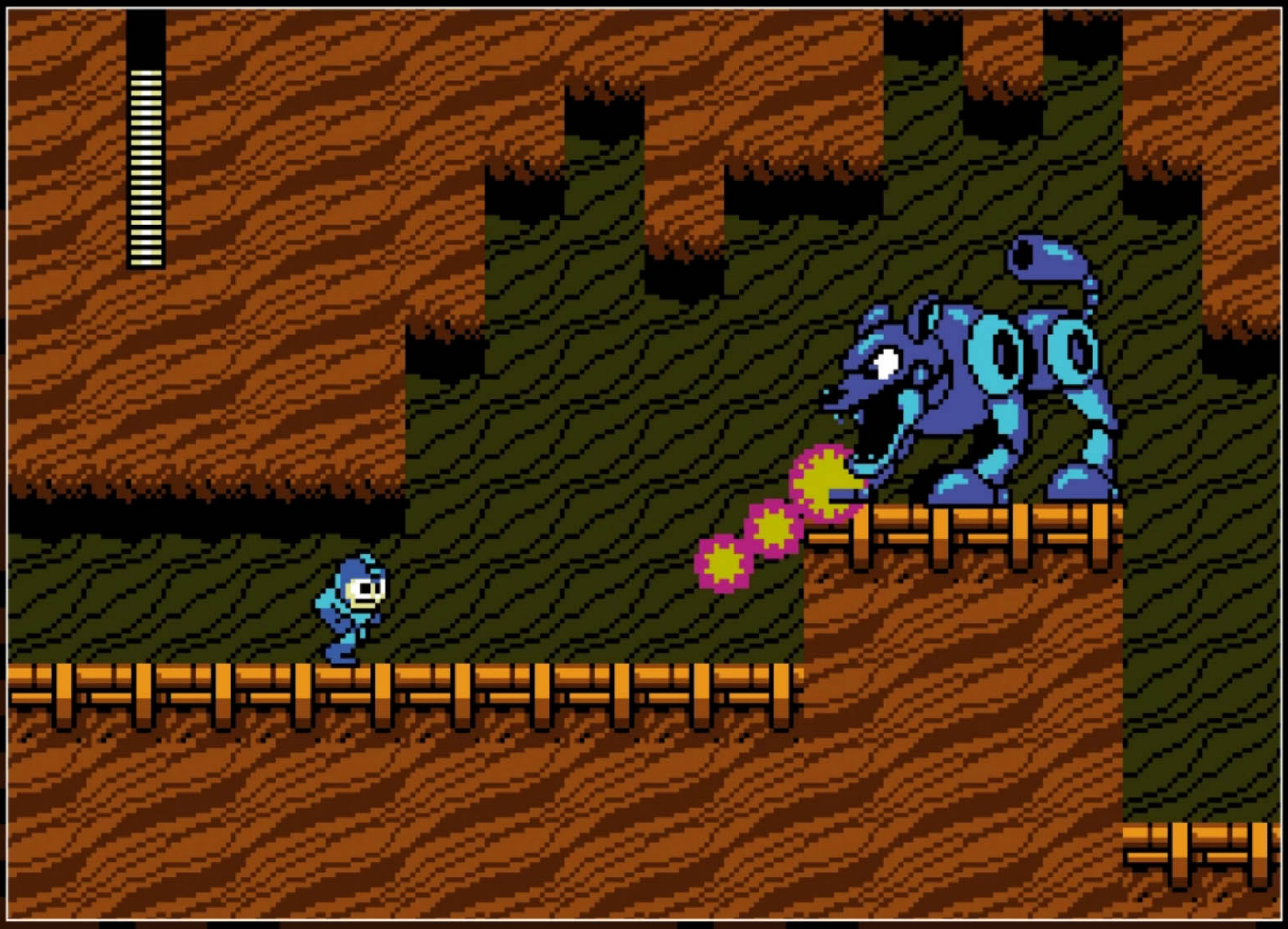
As notoriously attractive as it was notoriously arduous, Mega Man's second outing had the remarkable ability of being both really frustrating and really appeasing at exactly the same moment in time. This bemusing feeling came by it being brilliant to gawp at – with its chunky cartoon graphics, elaborate and varied characters and quirky themed levels – but also being an utter pig to complete. *Mega Man 2* is a run-'n'-gun-cum-platform puzzle game, and was a brilliant hotchpotch that worked fantastically as a showpiece of what the NES could achieve. It was also the *Mega*



» Bubble Man is one of the easiest bosses to kill, which probably has something to with the fact he opts to hit you with bubbles.



» Here's the boss roster. We would tell you the order in which you should tackle them, but it's been so long we've forgotten…

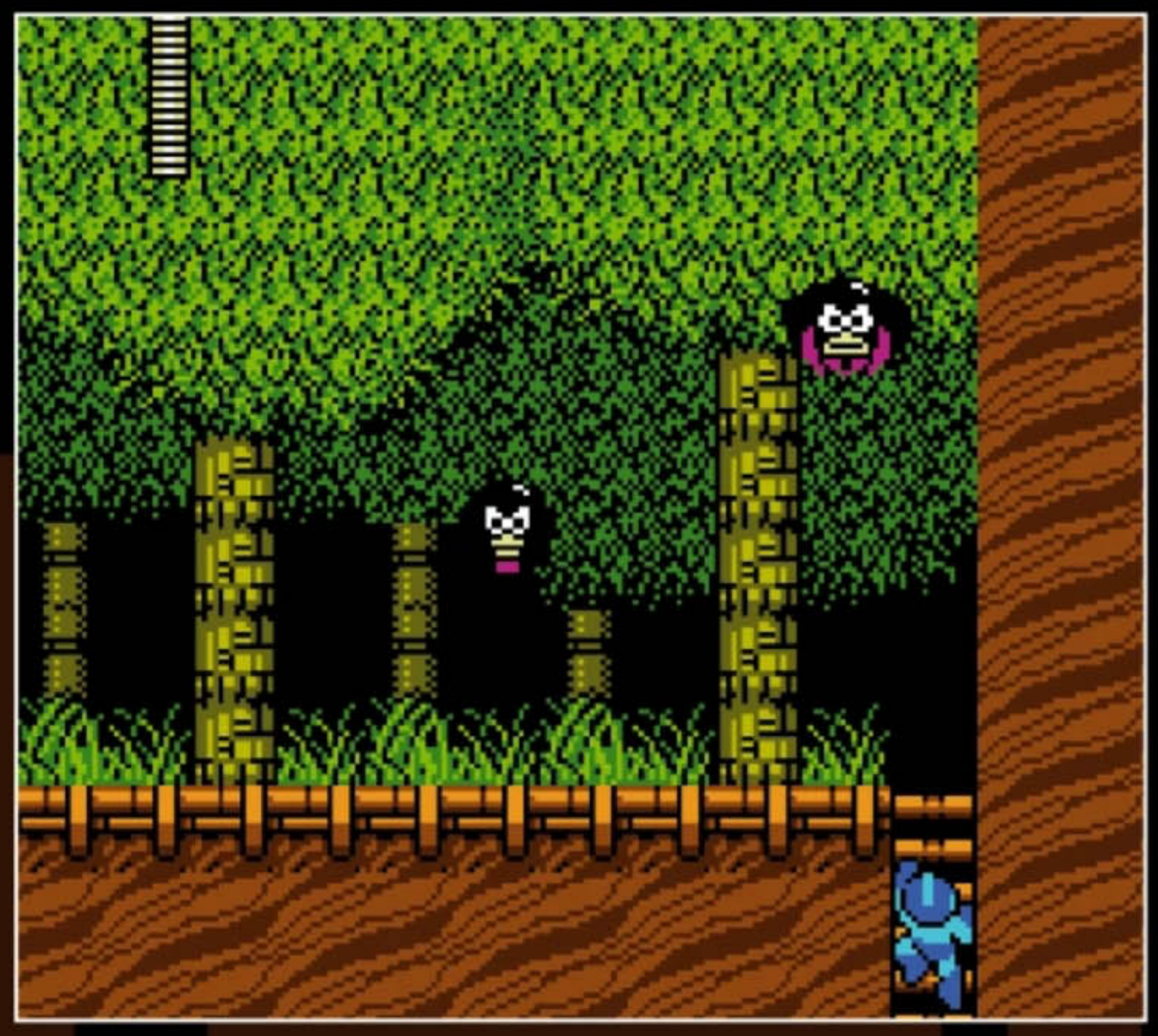


» Some of the midway enemies are actually bigger than the bosses themselves. Thankfully, they take fewer hits.

Man title that launched the metal might into global stardom, paving the way for many messy offshoots and sequels inside the franchise.

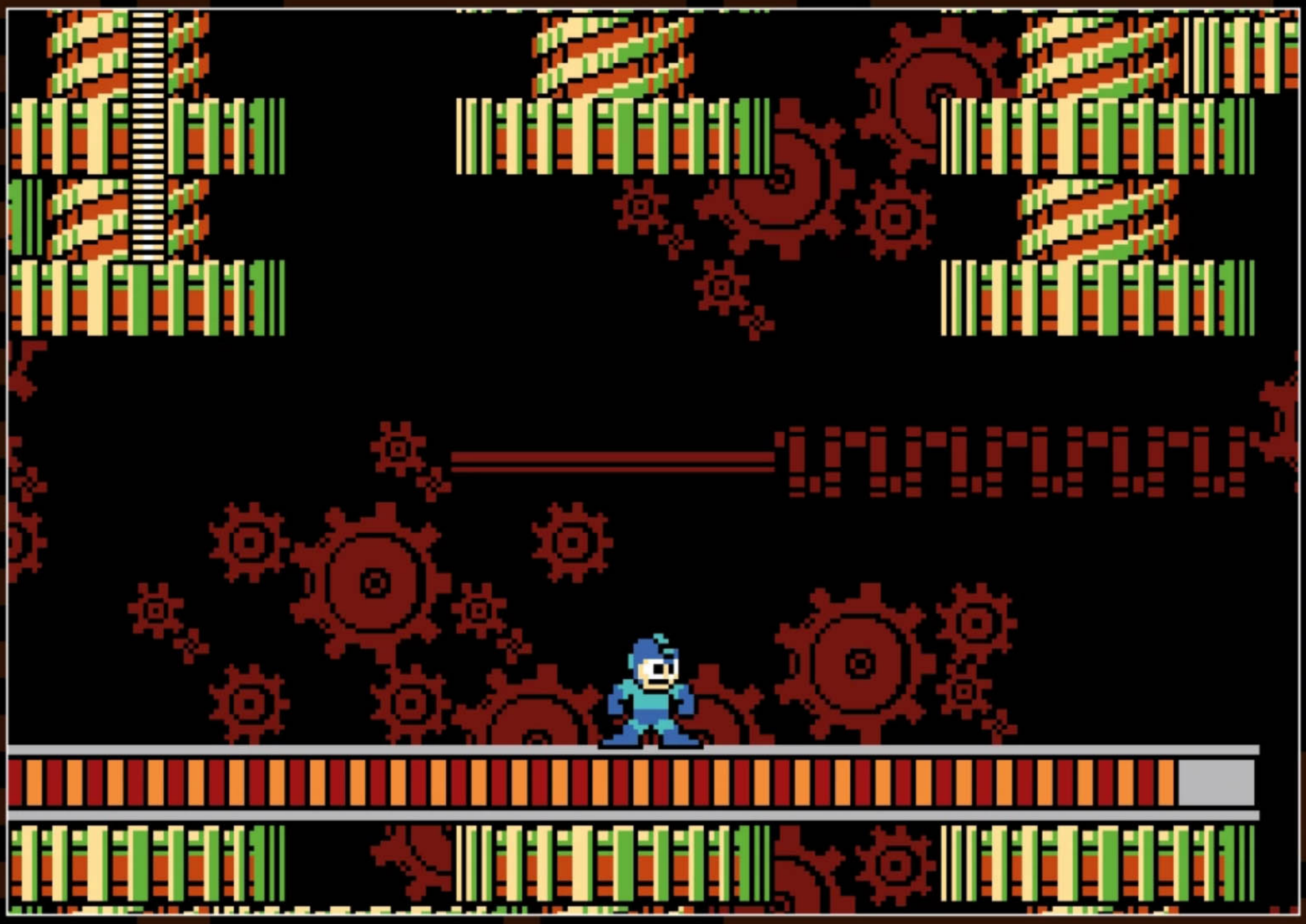
For *Mega Man 2*, all the raw elements of the first game were wholesaled over. Mega Man still had the ability to pilfer the powers of bosses and that dastardly boss-rush section also made a re-emergence. Plus, the bosses and their masochistic stages all played significance to the structure of play, as vanquishing Woodman and his potent leaf powers would have garlic-to-a-vampire properties to one of his robotic comrades. This rather large oversight by a blinkered Wily meant that the order in which you tackled the whimsically themed stages of *Mega Man 2* was quite significant in helping you prise open its heavy door of progression. On its release, however, some gamers lamented (and they do have a valid point) that, due to the sporadic themes of the bosses, this cross-referencing involved far too much trial and error and little rhyme or reason.

Mega Man 2 was also a bigger game than the first, and added two extra robotic bosses to the original's roster of six (with eight then becoming the numerical stay-in for *3* and *4*, etc). And after you've pilfered the abilities from all of the cybernetic foes in the game, it still grows in size again, leaving Mega Man, now resting on his newly acquired platform-generating powers, to traverse Wily's lair for a final showdown with his arch nemesis.

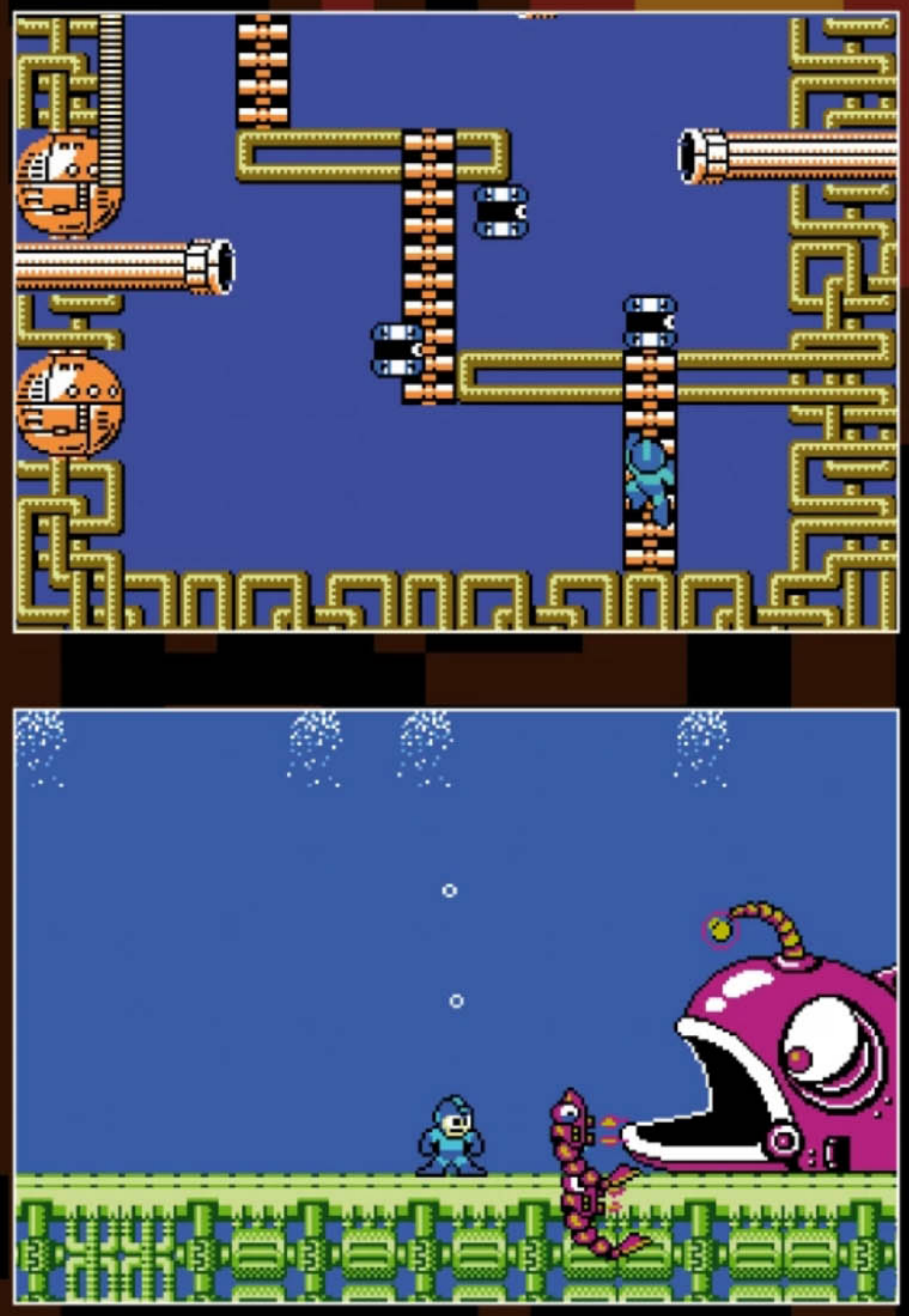


» Woodman's stage is one of the best-looking levels in the game.

Now, while it might seem strange for us to speak so negatively about a 'classic game', stupidly thorny gameplay has always been the essence of *Mega Man* titles. In fact, it became the bread and butter of the series. That aside, the game is widely regarded as the zenith of a highly popular and successful Capcom franchise. And while poor old Mega Man himself certainly doesn't get much love on our side of the water any more, he's still undoubtedly a national hero in his home country.



» Metal Man is a collector of oversized cogs. Regrettably.



» All of the stages are brilliantly themed, and look great.

"MEGA MAN'S SECOND OUTING HAD THE REMARKABLE ABILITY OF BEING BOTH FRUSTRATING AND APPEASING AT EXACTLY THE SAME MOMENT IN TIME"

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

RESIDENT EVIL
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION, GAMECUBE, PC, SATURN
YEAR: 1996

STREET FIGHTER II
SYSTEM: TAKE YOUR PICK
YEAR: 1991

FINAL FIGHT 3 AKA FINAL FIGHT TOUGH (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: SNES
YEAR: 1995

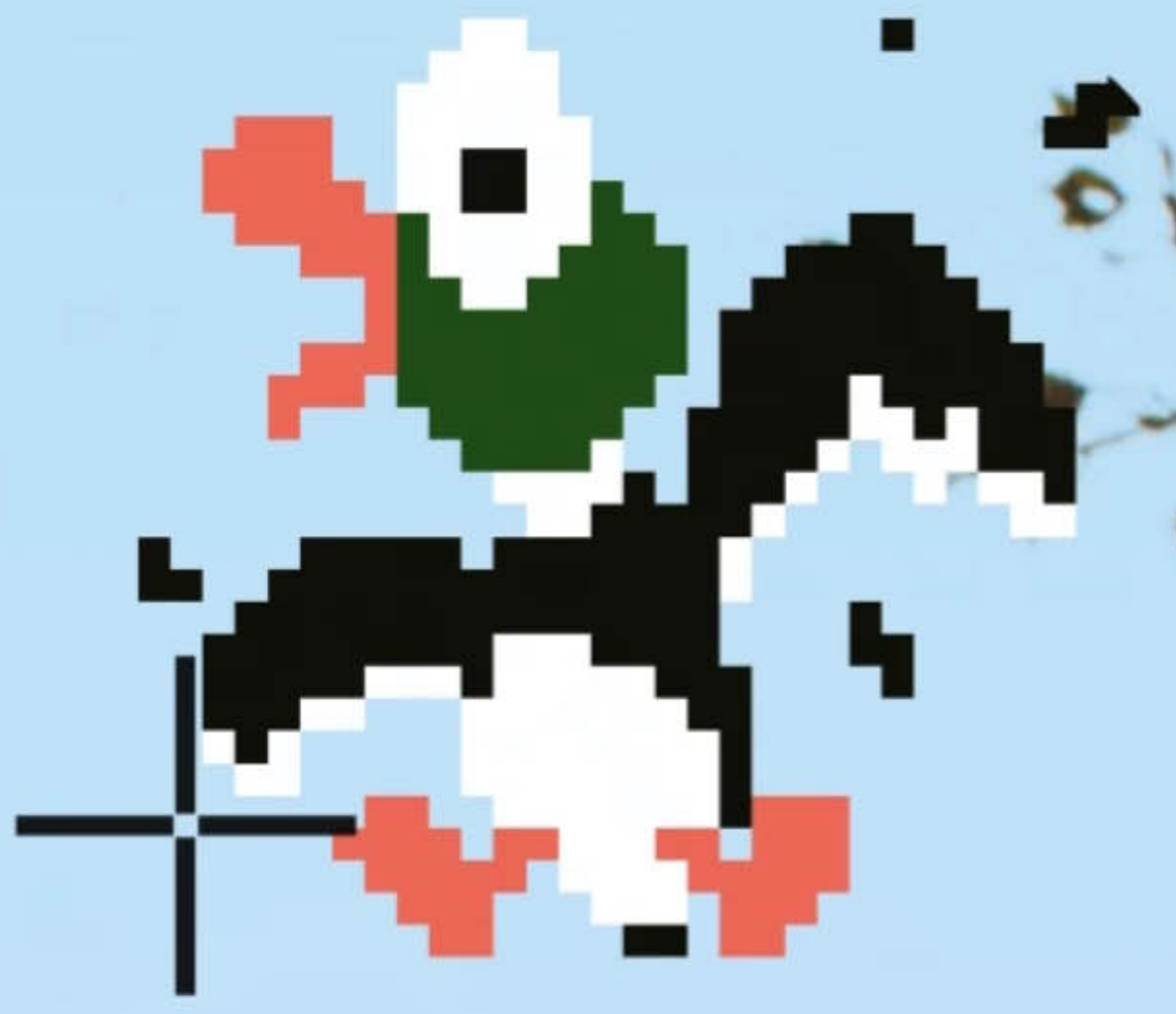
HAGGAR
THRASHER
50

BETTER THE DEVIL, IF YOU KNOW HOW

If you think *Mega Man 2* was an onerous challenge, try revisiting the first game. Despite being the shortest of the six *Mega Man* games to appear on the NES, the first game is widely regarded as not only the most gruelling in the series but one of the most backbreaking videogames full stop. This was principally afforded to the fact that there was no save or password system. Another brick wall the player would hit was the ridiculously hard-going Yellow Devil (aka Rock Monster) boss, whose laborious attack routine and annoyingly high attack-ratio allowed for a large 'Game Over' window to open up. Wily gamers, however, cottoned on to a peculiar two-tiered pause option bug, which allowed multiple attacks on enemies, if timed right, and if used with a bit of flair could help topple the yellow blighter effortlessly.

CUTMAN
GUTSMAN
SELECT STAGE
PRESS START
ELECMAN
ICEMAN
FIREMAN
BOMBMAN

> "As with other Nintendo games, it's a piece of people's childhoods. Anyone who grew up owning a NES remembers it fondly"
>
> Jerry Momoda



DUCK HUNT

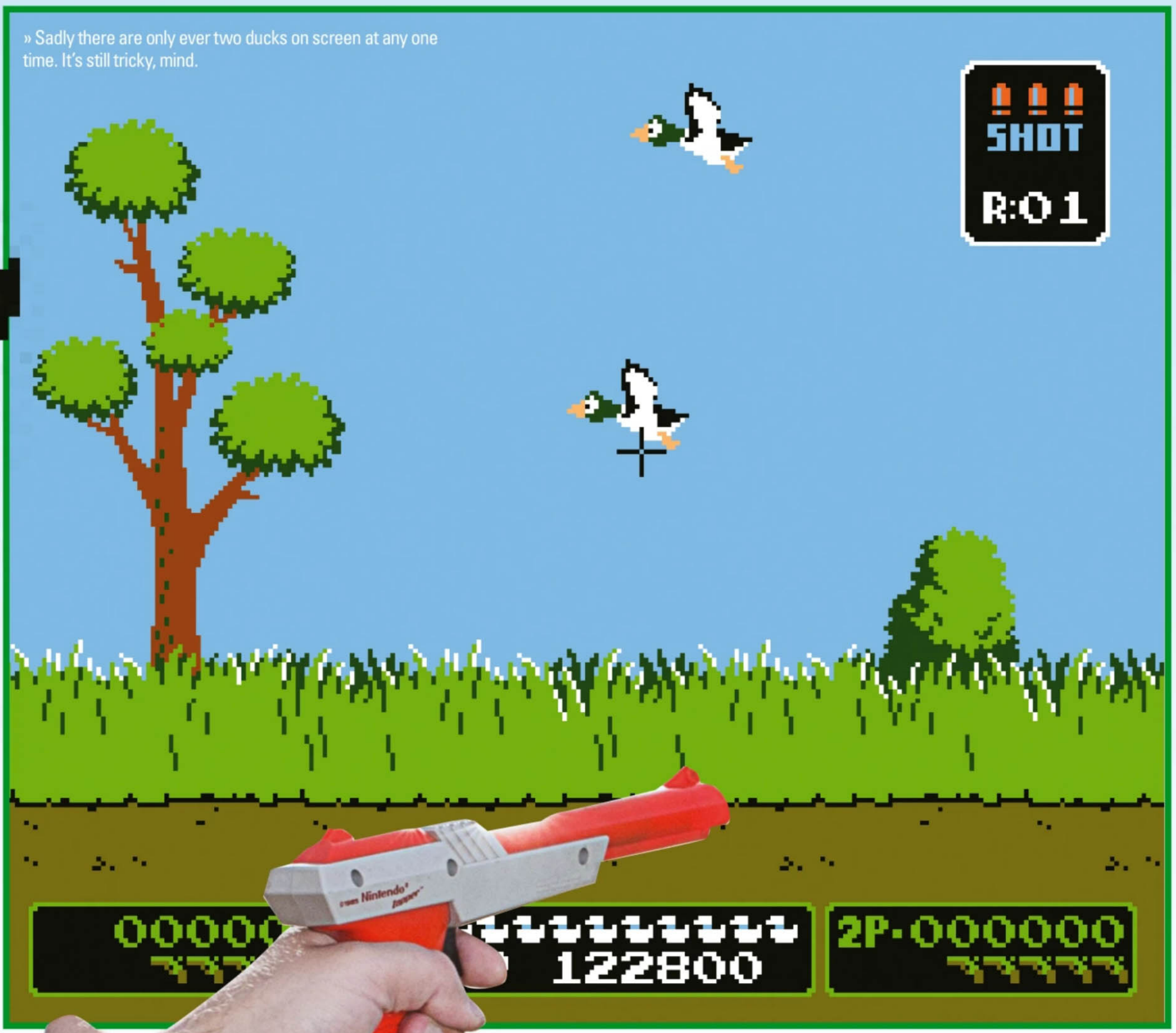
Starring a smarmy dog and scores of hapless flying wildfowl, Duck Hunt was the game that introduced many to the joys of the NES Zapper lightgun. Mike Bevan looks back at the history and enduring appeal of Nintendo's virtual hunting trip

Most gamers of a certain age will almost certainly have played *Duck Hunt*, for one simple reason – it was paired on a pack-in cartridge for the Nintendo Entertainment System along with one of the most popular and groundbreaking console games of all time, *Super Mario Bros*. But while Shigeru Miyamoto's platform classic was undoubtedly the more attention-grabbing title of the compilation, *Duck Hunt* retains the endearing nostalgia of childhood, a cartoon shooting gallery with a sniggering canine companion and the hapless quacks of animated flapping ducks brought down by the simple act of pulling a plastic trigger. The grinning face of *Duck Hunt*'s dog, fresh from rooting around in bushes for nesting gun-fodder, has become an ironic and humorous hallmark for videogaming disappointment after missing your quarry in Nintendo's lightgun shooter. And 30 years on, he's set to make a comeback in the latest instalment of the *Super Smash Bros* fighting game franchise with a feathered friend in tow. It seems all these years later, the ducks are striking back.

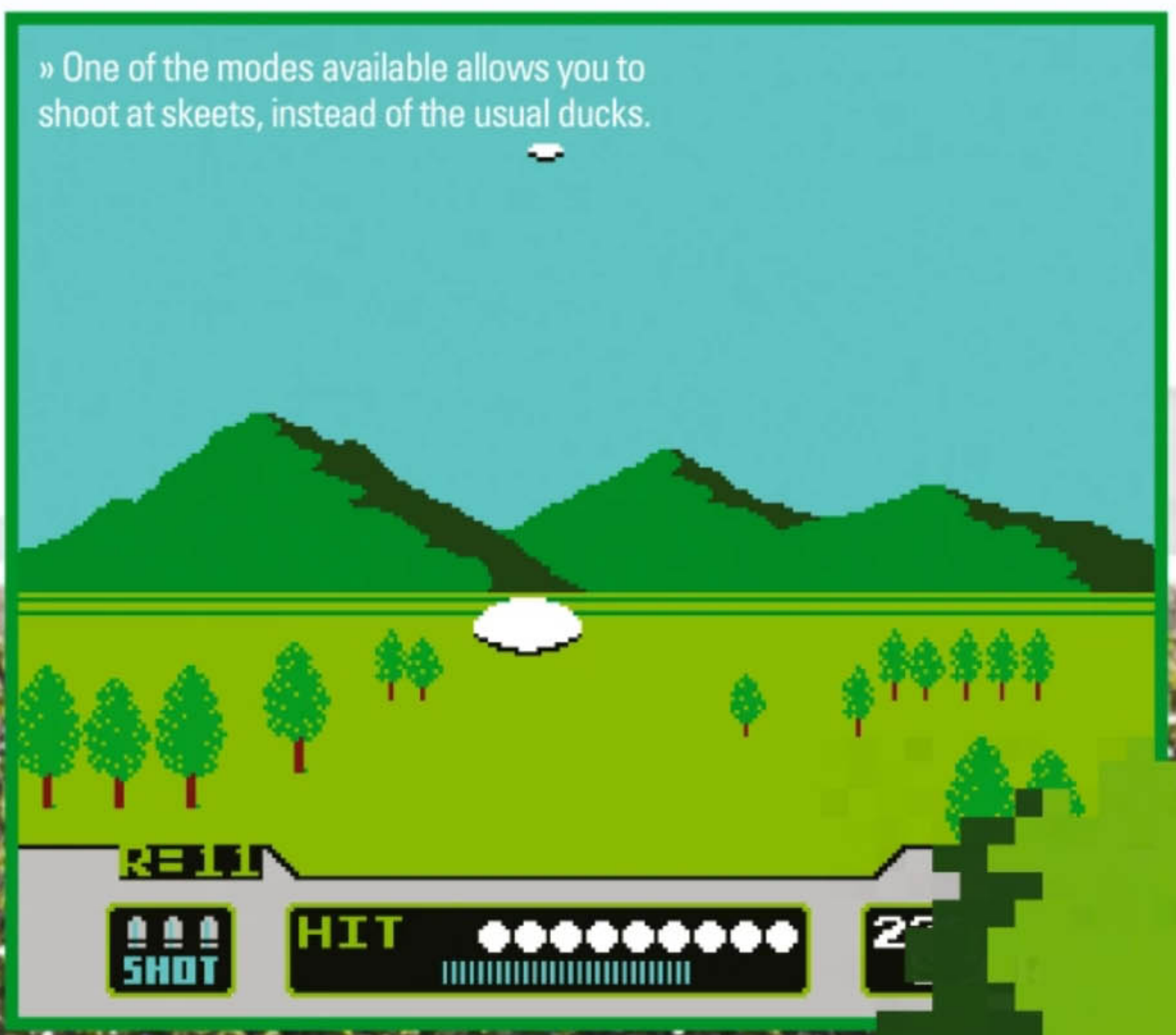
Although most people may know *Duck Hunt* from the *Super Mario Bros* compilation cart, it was in fact the debut pack-in title for the North American NES launch in 1985, when it came bundled with *Gyromite*, a platform game that worked with Nintendo's Johnny Five-alike robot R.O.B. Coupled with its later appearance as a pack-in for various NES bundles alongside *Super Mario Bros* and *World Class Track Meet*, that's an awful lot of copies of *Duck Hunt* out in the wild.

Produced by renowned Nintendo designer Gunpei Yokoi, creator of the Game & Watch and Game Boy handheld systems, *Duck Hunt* was in fact a digital reincarnation of his earlier electromechanical toy, a Kôsenjû ('light ray gun') game of the same name. Released in 1976, the product used a small mirror-projection device to project white duck silhouettes onto a wall. The ducks would 'fall', accompanied by a loud quack,

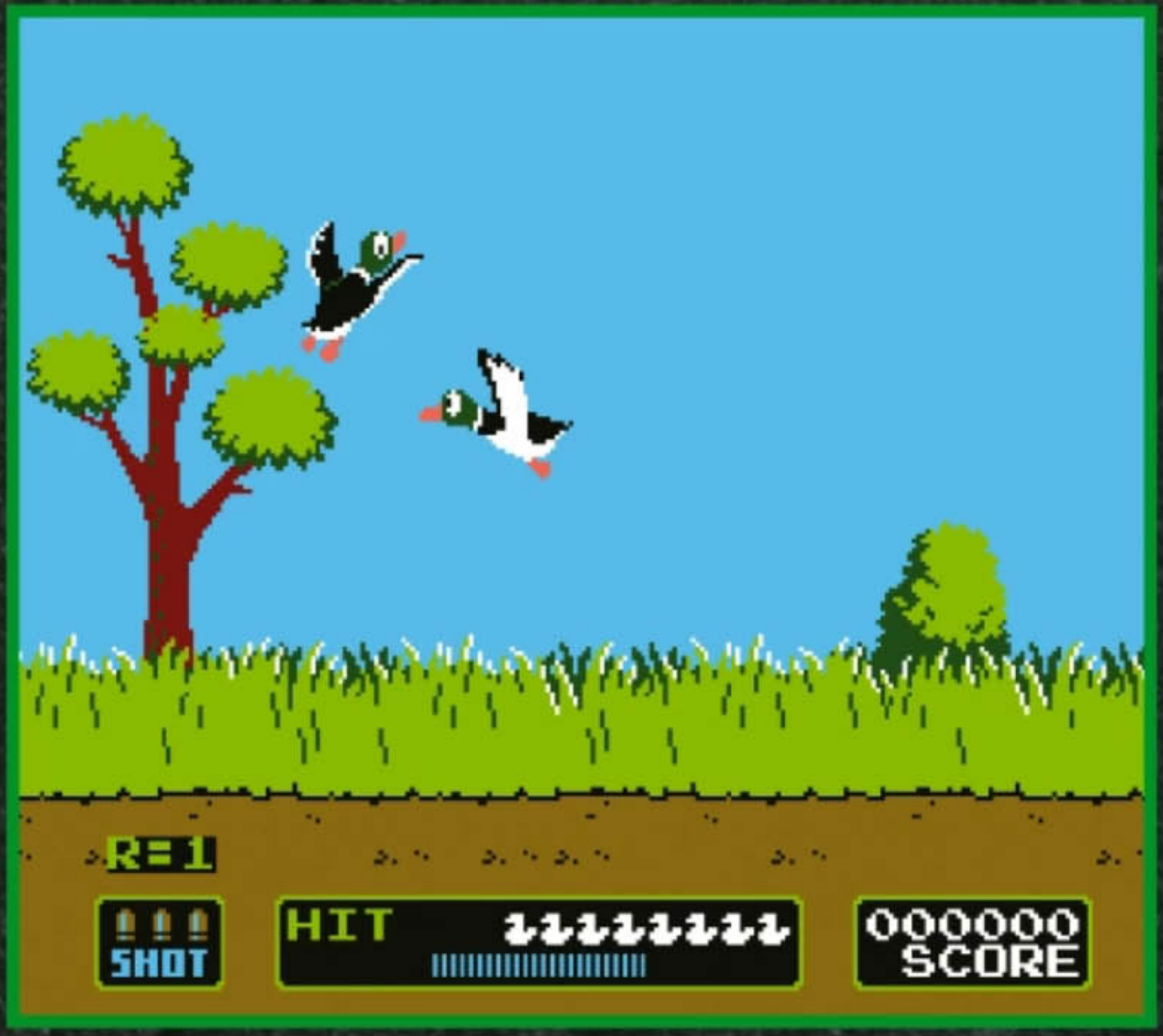
▶



» Sadly there are only ever two ducks on screen at any one time. It's still tricky, mind.



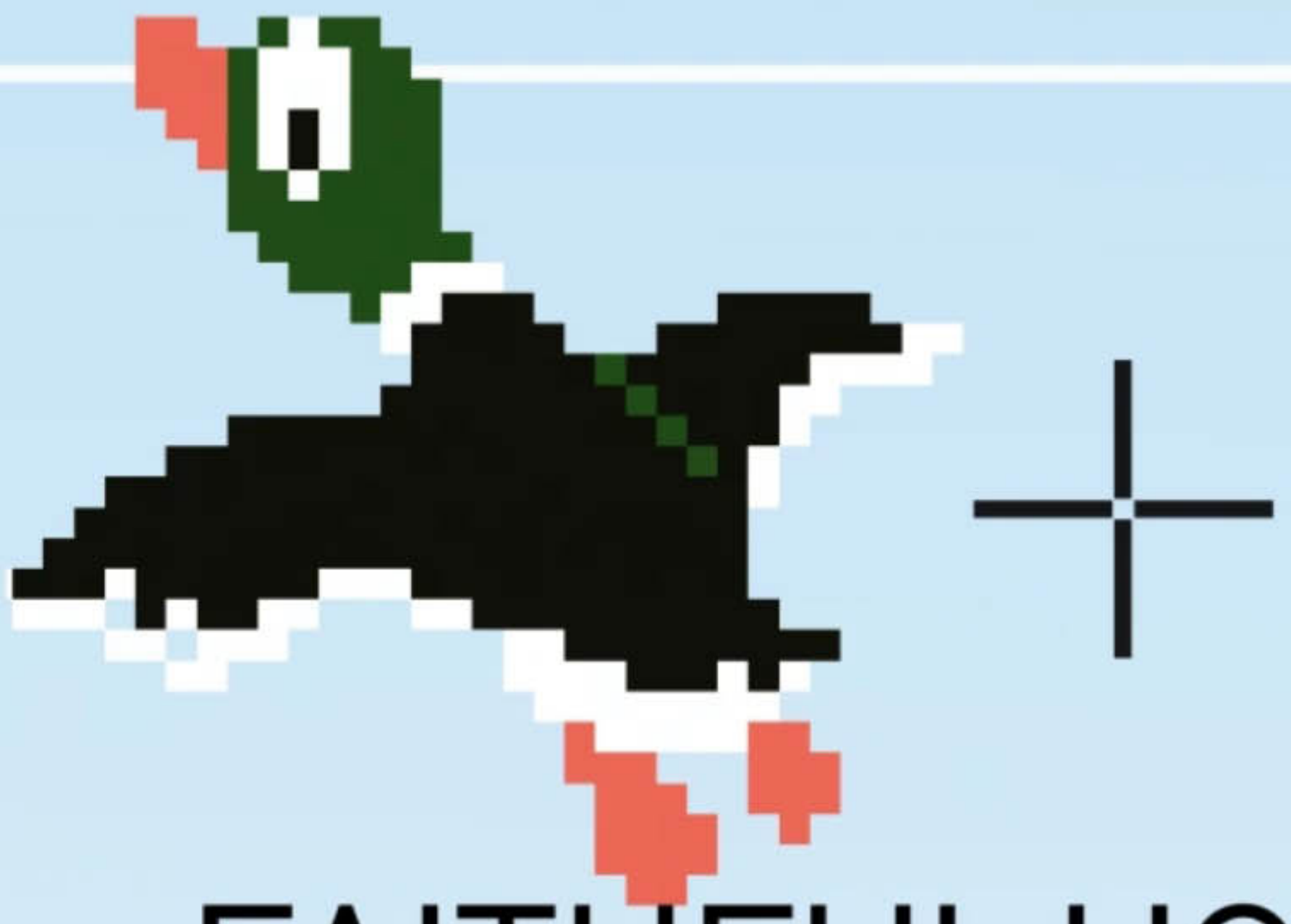
» One of the modes available allows you to shoot at skeets, instead of the usual ducks.



» Contrary to popular belief, there are actually three different coloured ducks in *Duck Hunt*.

▶ when the player hit them with the shotgun-shaped lightgun provided. In fact, despite the absence of a pastoral background or your ubiquitous hunting dog, the basic game mechanics were very similar to the future NES version. However, the relatively high retail price of 9,500 yen (around £75 adjusted for inflation) meant it was an expensive novelty back in Seventies Japan.

The version of *Duck Hunt* that most of us are familiar with was launched on the Japanese Famicom console in April, 1984. It was one of three initial titles for Nintendo's new Famicom Beam Gun peripheral, along with the Wild West-themed *Wild Gunman*, and the police-training style shooter *Hogan's Alley*. In North America a version of the game was released for Nintendo's VS arcade system the same year, prior to its home release in 1985. Former Nintendo market-research analyst Jerry Momoda remembers *Vs Duck Hunt* well. "VS System games were an inexpensive two-chip update [of existing Famicom titles] with new cabinet graphics," he says. "They were a welcome alternative for operators who had plenty of old cabinets. Operators could quickly change games on location with little downtime, and keep locations fresh with new titles. The VS



PERIPHERAL VISION

Other games featuring notable or peculiar hardware add-ons

GYROMITE NES

■ Aka *Robot Gyro*, it was designed for use with the Robotic Operating Buddy (R.O.B.) for NES. It's a two-player puzzle platform game, the second player using R.O.B. to move on-screen gates and pillars by manipulating a pair of gyroscopic spinning tops.

MARIO CLASH VIRTUAL BOY

■ Amazingly, there were no proper Mario games on Nintendo's failed console. What there was, however, was this fun effort that has Mario flinging shells at enemies on distant ledges while avoiding enemies and hazards found on his own platform.

YOSHI'S SAFARI SNES

■ One of the few fun times to be had with Nintendo's clunky Super Scope lightgun, it's an odd hybrid that sees you trundling along a highway blasting Bowser's minions, jumping obstacles and fighting ridiculous-looking bosses.

RESIDENT EVIL 4 VARIOUS

■ For its survival-horror masterpiece, Capcom released a bloody-looking chainsaw-style controller. The PS2 version even made little revving noises as you ran around decapitating zombies. Sadly, the shape of the controller was a bit awkward.

OUT RUN 3D MASTER SYSTEM

■ While *Space Harrier* deserves a mention, we're actually going to go with *Out Run 3D*. The animation is a little choppy at time, but the impressive visuals and new track designs certainly make up for it. Highly recommended.

FAITHFUL HOUNDS

More videogames featuring doggy heroes

STAR PAWS

VARIOUS

■ Based on an abandoned concept that was dreamt up by *Manic Miner* creator Matthew Smith, *Star Paws* resembled a sort of *Road Runner* in space. As Captain Roger Pawstrong it was your job to capture delicious but fiendishly wary Space Griffins and dispatch them to Earth. The C64 version featured a great soundtrack by composer Rob Hubbard.

SLEEPWALKER

AMIGA

■ Released in aid of the BBC's Comic Relief charity, this game saw players controlling Ralph the dog and protecting his sleepwalking master. Ralph had to neutralise various hazards in his owner's path as he careered ever-onwards, taking care not to wake him up. It also featured small cameos from comedians Lenny Henry and Harry Enfield.

SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD

PC DOS

■ This was the first outing for Steve Purcell's unlikely detective duo – a six-foot fedora-wearing dog and a hyperkinetic 'rabbity-thing'. It's an all-American road trip involving robot scientists, a frozen Bigfoot and the world's biggest ball of twine, and formed the basis for Telltale Games' modern episodic series of adventures.

PARAPPA THE RAPPER

PLAYSTATION

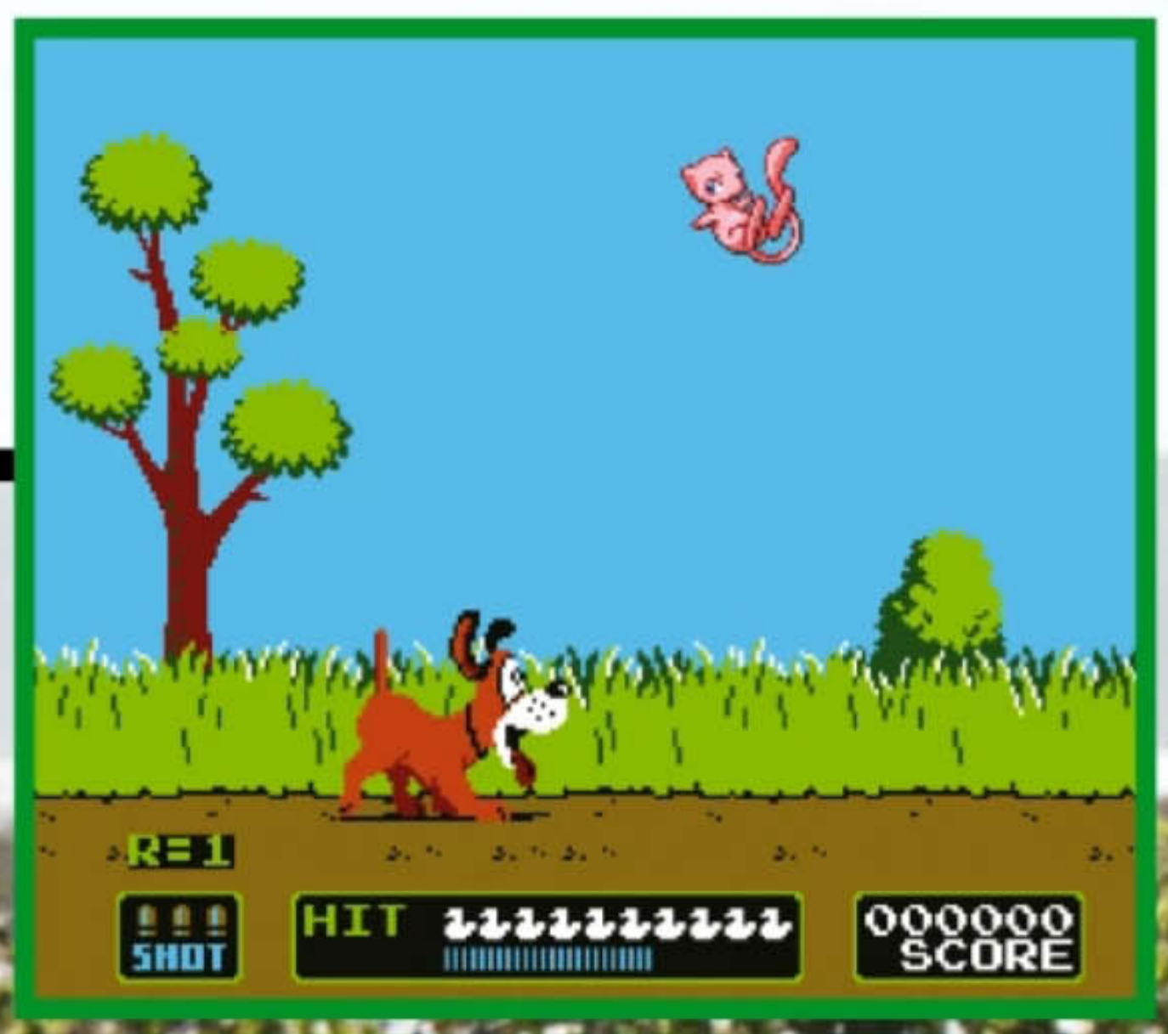
■ Wonderfully quirky and unmistakably Japanese, *Parappa* introduced us to the peculiar tale of a funky paper-thin canine, his sunflower girlfriend, and a karate-practising onion, among other things. A precursor to the many popular rhythm-based games that followed, it also spawned a guitar-focused sequel *UmJammer Lammy*.

OKAMI

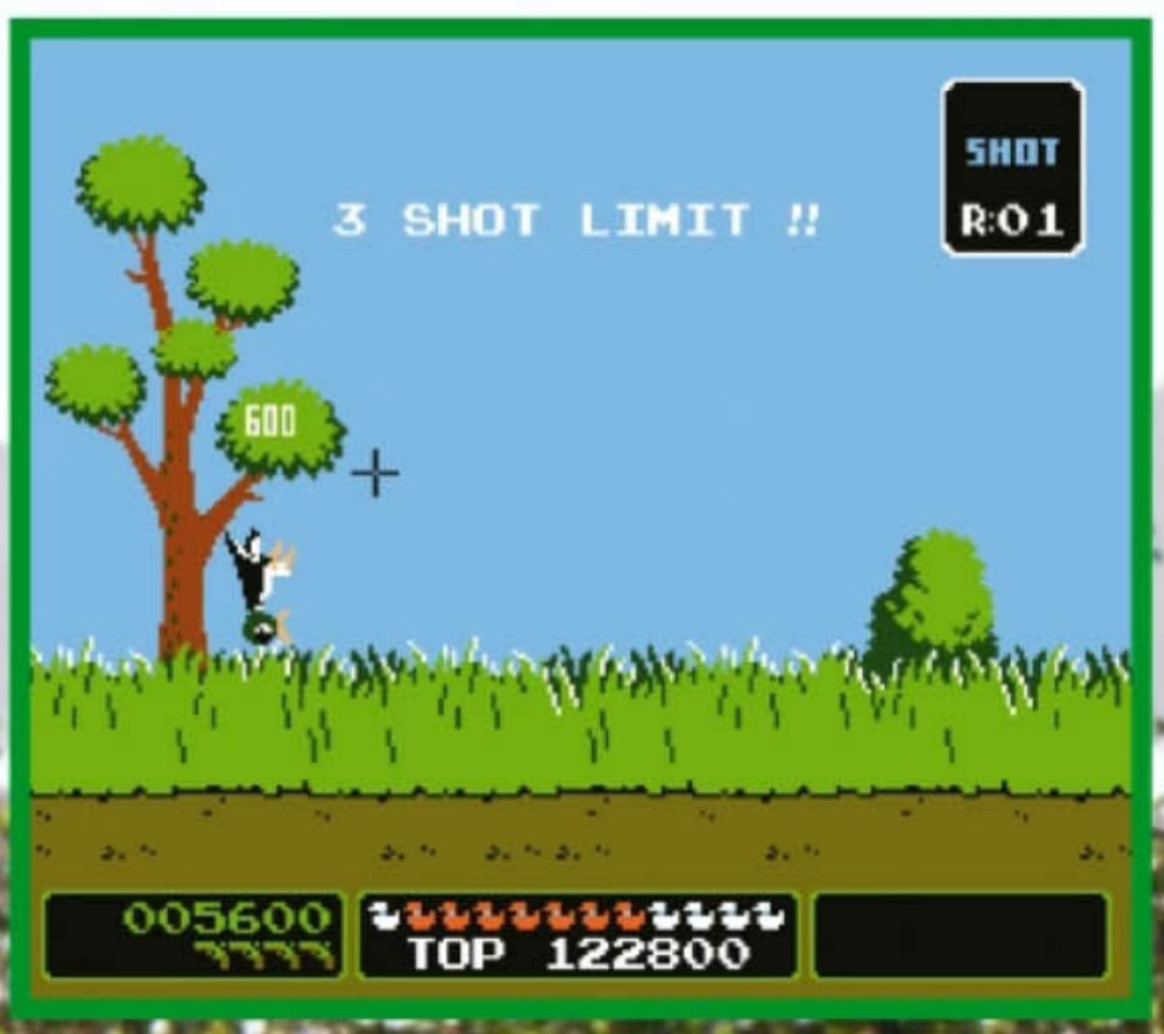
VARIOUS

■ *Okami* puts you into the paws of a snow-white wolf called Amaterasu, tasked with exploring a watercolour-like medieval Japan. You'll need to master the game's innovative 'brush stroke' techniques to solve puzzles and strike down enemies, while colouring in the beautifully dreamlike game world resembling a children's drawing book.

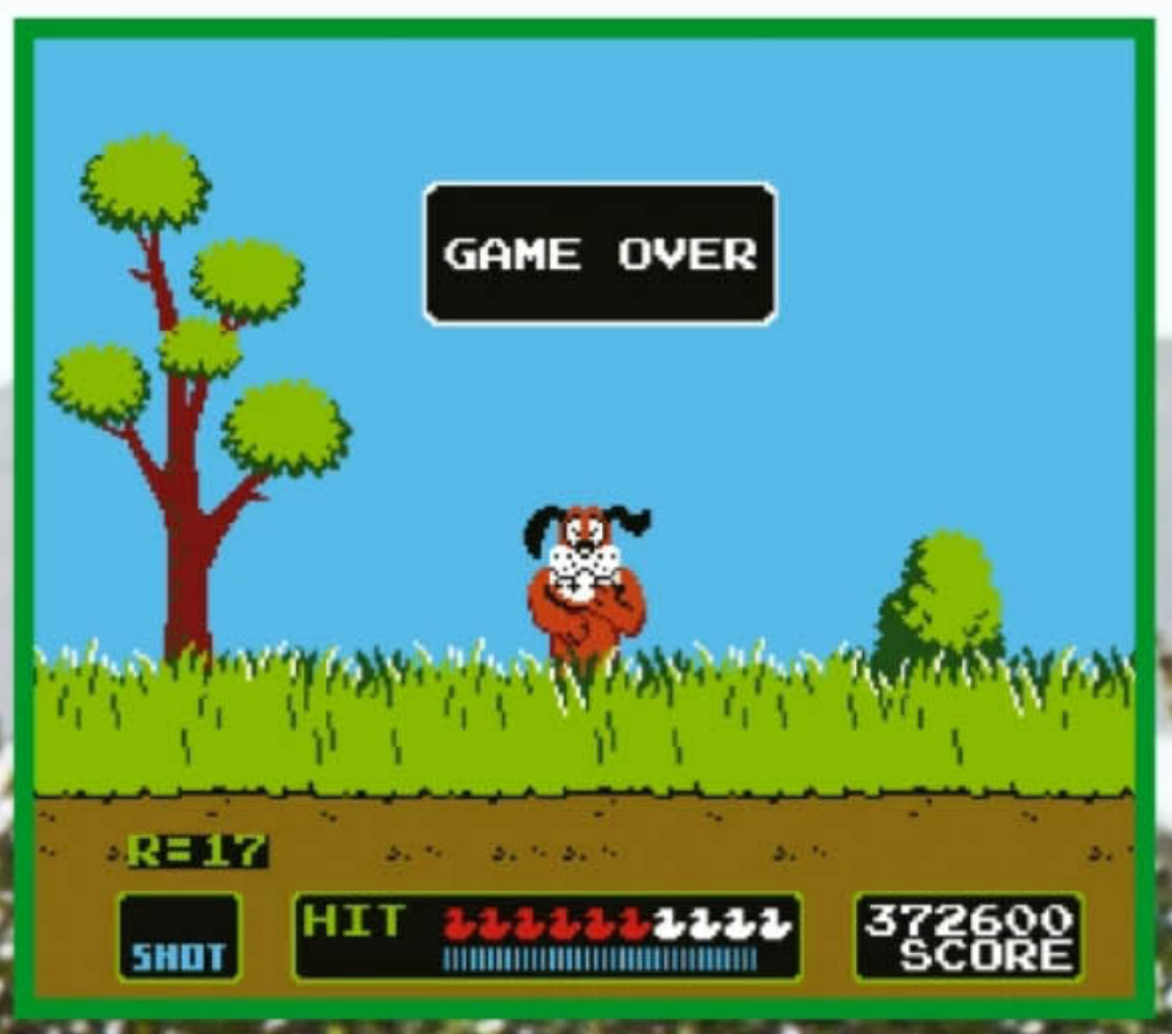
» Each level starts with your faithful hound sniffing out ducks, before leaping into action.



» *Duck Hunt* is effectively a remake of one of Gunpei Yokoi's earlier games.



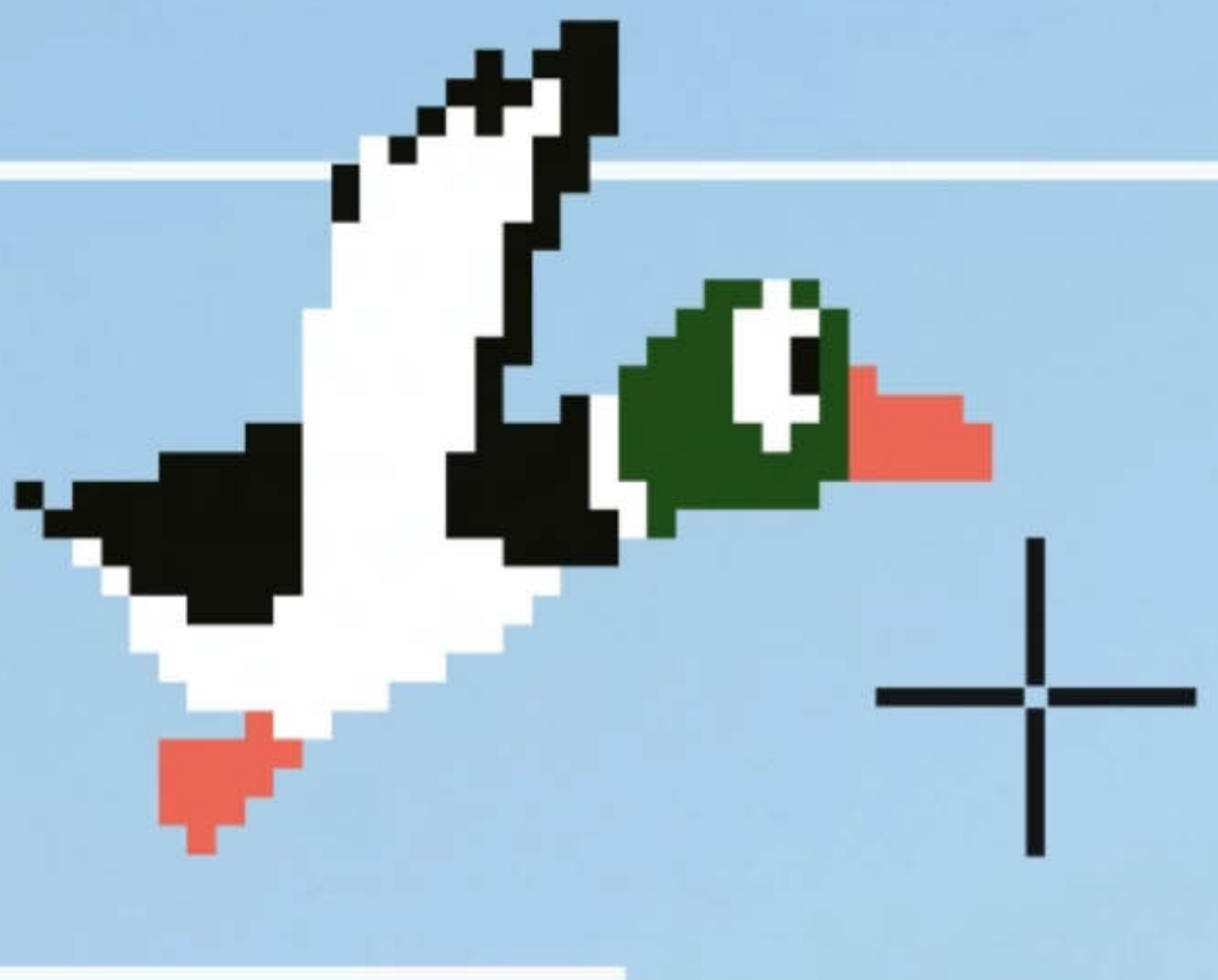
» The dog's name is rumoured to be Mr Peepers, but we've found no hard proof of this.



> "The first [arcade gun] version was black and looked like a .357 Magnum, so much that it was too realistic for American street locations"

System and PlayChoice were very successful and Nintendo's last official coin-op games. Our guns were imported from Japan. The first version was black in colour and looked like a .357 Magnum, so much that it was too realistic for American street locations and could be mistaken for a real gun. They were made of pliable rubber over a metal core, and as such didn't last long in American arcades…"

While the arcade version of *Duck Hunt* was for the most part very similar to the console release, there were a couple of notable differences. The cabinet was set up with a couple of lightguns with players taking turns to play, and the game alternated between duck and skeet shooting rounds. And, as perhaps could be deduced from the cabinet marquee, which depicted *Duck Hunt* dog cowering from a hail of bullets, it was possible to shoot more than just the ducks. There was an added bonus round in which our canine pal popped up among the feathered targets and could be blasted by 'mistake', a misdemeanour for which he'd rightfully scold you at the end of the segment. To the future disappointment of many a NES *Duck Hunt* player that longed to zap that annoying grin off the mickey-taking hound, this little Easter Egg was unfortunately nowhere to be seen in the console version. While ▶



JERRY MOMODA

At Nintendo of America in the Eighties, Jerry helped to test and promote new arcade and console products

What's your personal history with the console and arcade versions of *Duck Hunt*?
I was hired by Nintendo in 1982, and was fortunate to be the one to communicate with Japan on games in development. No one wanted to touch the console industry in America after the crash of 1983. The VS [Arcade] System served as a bridge leading up to the North American NES release in 1985. Both *Duck Hunt* and *Hogan's Alley* were first released for the coin-op VS System in 1984. The VS System was simply a coin-operated version of the Japanese Famicom console.

Was the arcade version of *Duck Hunt* as popular as the home version?
It was designed to be a Famicom/NES title, from the simplicity of gameplay and the graphics. *Duck Hunt* was bundled along with *Super Mario Bros* in some configurations of the NES console, so it reached way more players. It's a better fit for the console player base. *Duck Hunt* and *Hogan's Alley* both had instant but not long-lasting appeal in arcades.

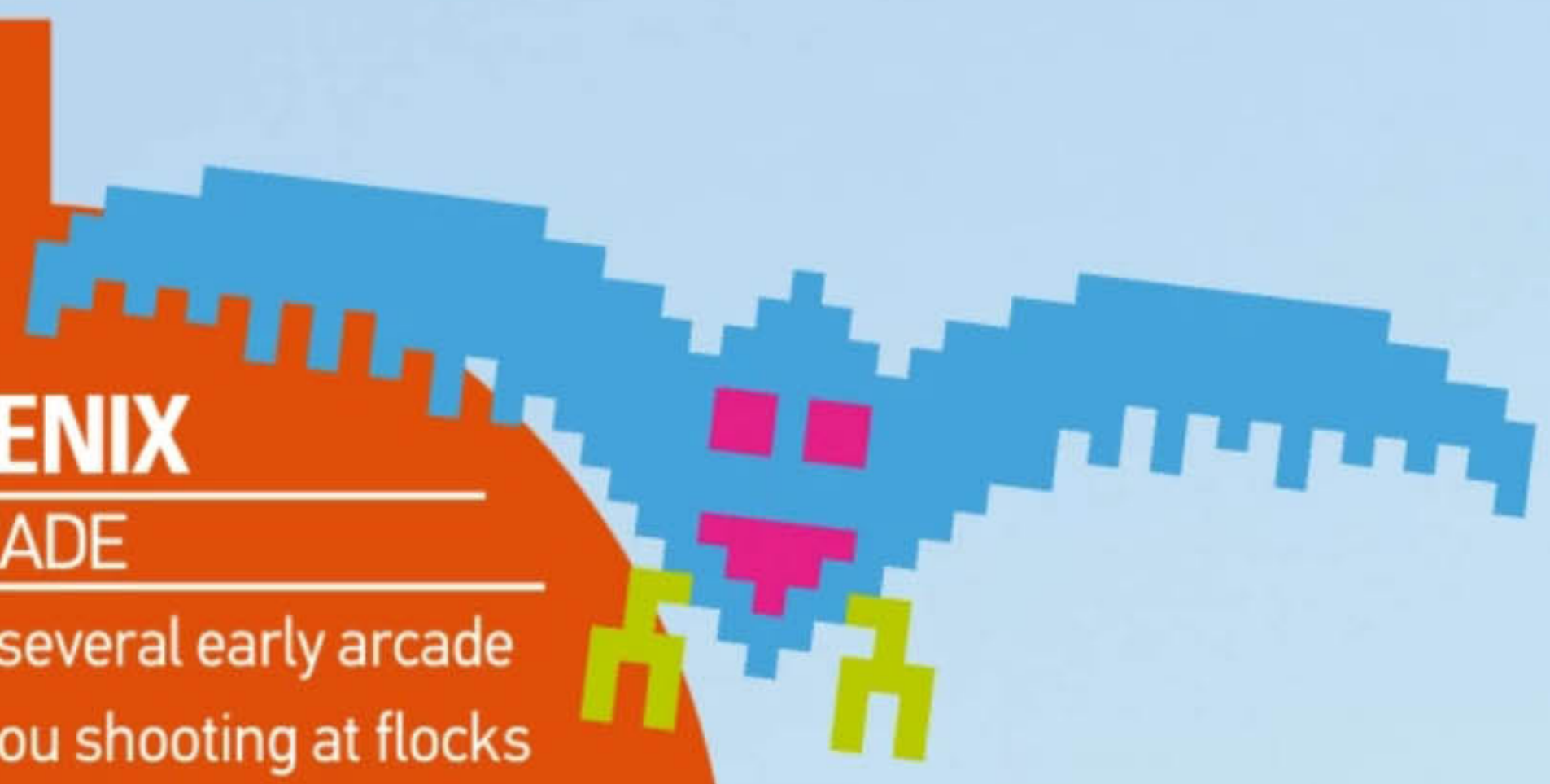
And in the arcade version you could actually shoot that pesky dog?!
Everyone wanted to shoot [it] because it mocked players. And so it played an antagonist role as it taunted players by laughing at them. For obvious reasons, being able to shoot the dog was removed from the NES version. This was designed to be good, clean, family fun – a Nintendo trademark. In *Hogan's Alley*, shooting people (though animated) probably affected its marketability.

How important do you think the cartoon-like graphics were in drawing people in?
In the home market I think it had a lot of appeal. For the players it targeted, cartoon-like graphics had a strong appeal. The warm, vibrant colours used in *Duck Hunt* gave it a whole different feel than games like *Hogan's Alley*. Naturally, parents don't mind as much if little Johnny is going cartoon duck hunting versus shooting at humans in a realistic war, zombie, crime or space game.

Why do you think *Duck Hunt* is still so fondly remembered today?
As with other Nintendo games, it's a piece of people's childhood. Anyone who grew up owning a NES remembers this game fondly. Being a pack-in, nearly everybody owned the game. It's a conversation piece that people can share. The same way they talk about *Super Mario Bros*…

TWEETY BIRDS

Ten more videogames starring various feathered friends

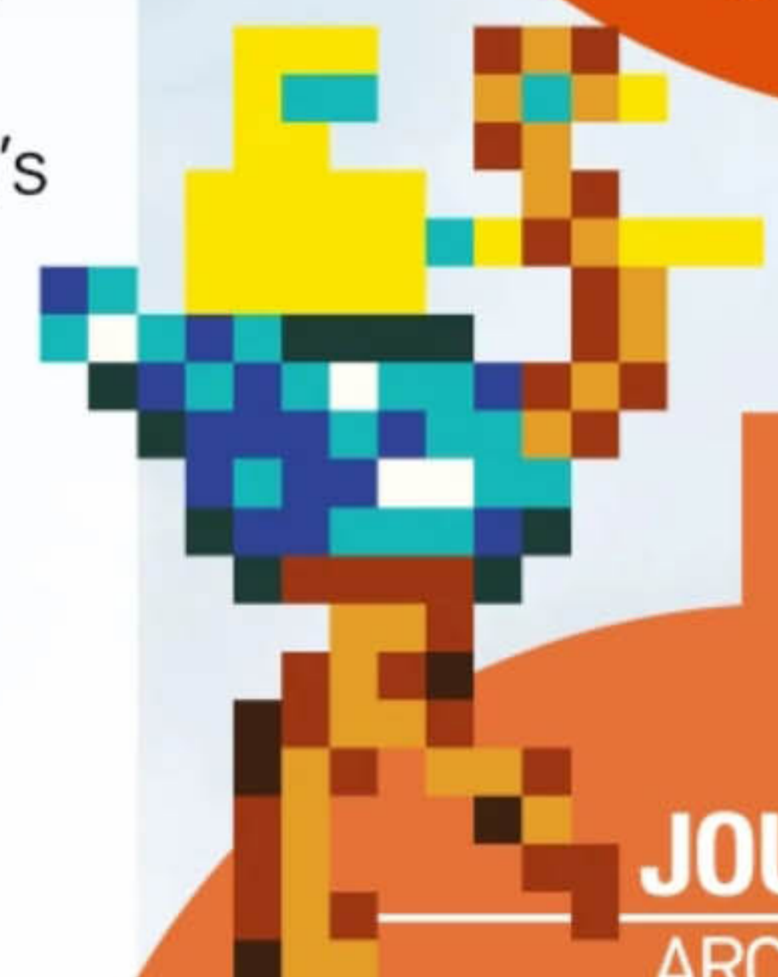


PHOENIX
ARCADE

■ For some reason several early arcade shoot-'em-ups had you shooting at flocks of kamikaze birds in space, notably Nintendo's *Space Firebird* and this offering from Centuri/Taito. Though highly derivative of *Galaxian*, it had a certain charm, especially the stage with eggs hatching into larger winged baddies, and the final mothership which players had to chip away piece by piece in order to destroy the core.

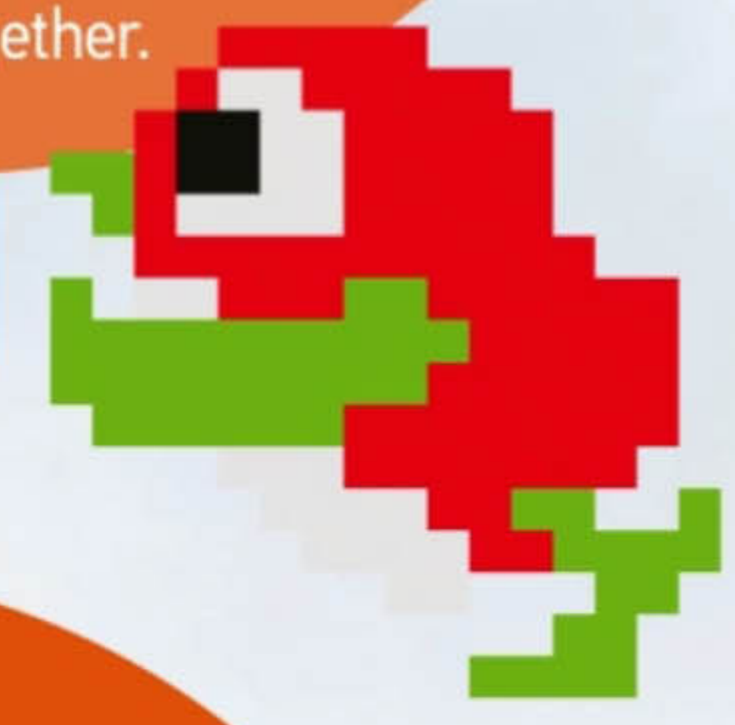
PENGO
ARCADE

■ If you like the idea of squashing cute blobby monsters with ice blocks, accompanied by a rendition of synth instrumental classic 'Popcorn', then *Pengo* is the game for you. The aim is to defeat Pengo's arch-enemies, the Sno-Bees, by flattening them with the movable parts of the maze. Your diminutive penguin can also stun enemies by wobbling the side of the screen, or win by pushing three 'diamond' blocks together.



JOUST
ARCADE

■ *Joust*'s unique concept of making simple physics your weaponry made it stand out in Eighties arcades, plus the fact that it was one of the first co-operative two-player games. As a pair of knights mounted on an ostrich and a stork, it was a matter of hammering the flap button to gain altitude then using gravity to come down on top of enemies mounted on buzzards, knocking them from their steeds.

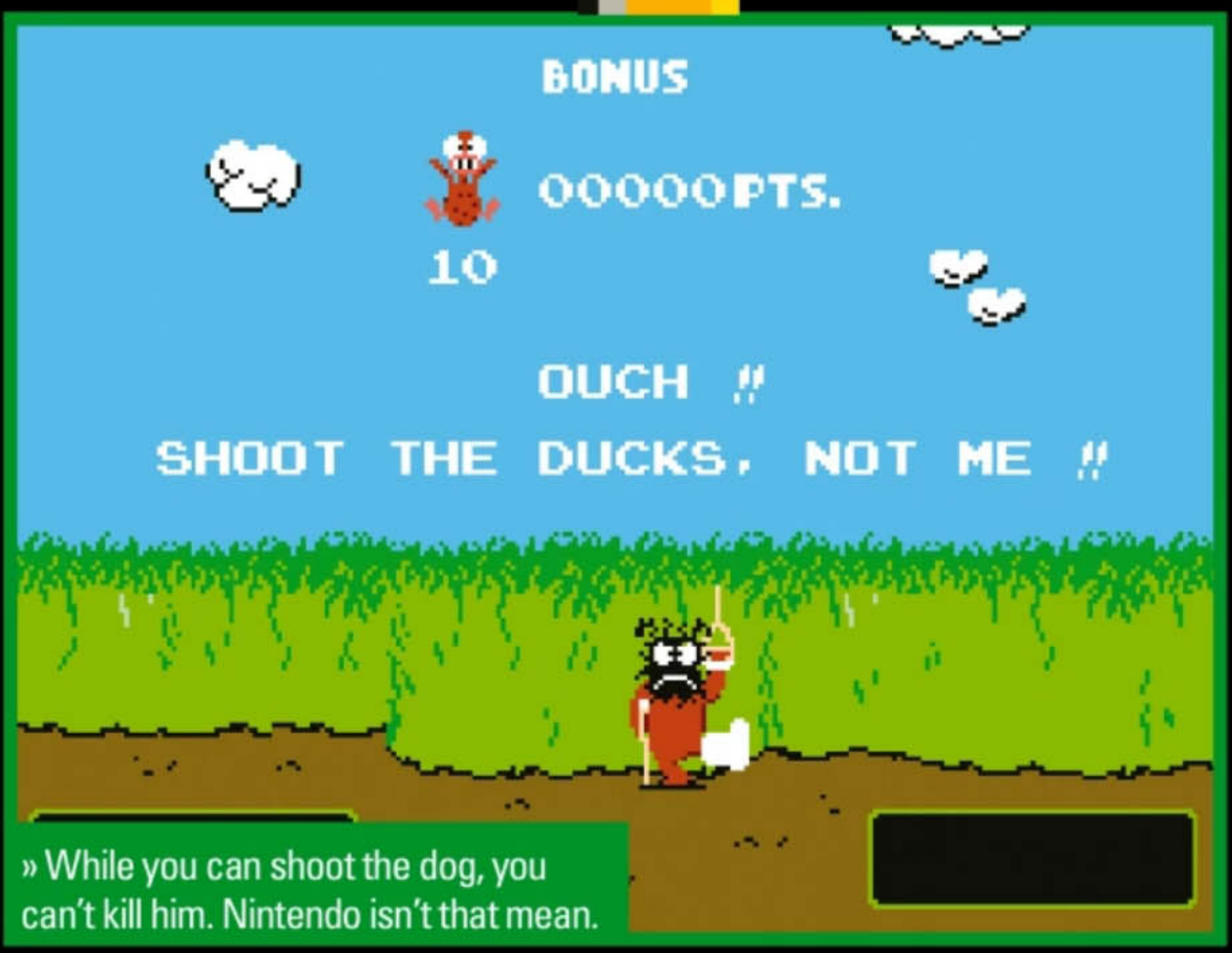


FLICKY
ARCADE

■ This attractive arcade game was designed by Yoji Ishii, who later went on to create the colourful shoot-'em-up *Fantasy Zone*. The game sports a great degree of character, particularly in the form of Flicky himself, a cute blue bird tasked with rescuing a number of yellow chicks from the clutches of some mean pussycats. The way they follow you around in a little line across the scrolling stages is simply adorable.

▶ Nintendo was happy enough to let as shoot at defensive poultry, discharging virtual slugs at the family pet was it seems a step too far for domestic duck-hunters.

For the Western release of the NES lightgun, the famous Zapper, the Dirty Harry-style Japanese Beam Gun was remodelled as a futuristic, and somewhat less realistic virtual weapon. Inside the Zapper was a simple sensor which responded to changes in luminosity on the screen. In *Duck Hunt* and other Nintendo Zapper titles, pulling the trigger caused the screen to black out and display white boxes around the targets, just for a fraction of a second. The Zapper detected this change in intensity of light along with whether you were near enough centred on the boxes to score a hit on a duck. And that's why when you played *Duck Hunt* you'd occasionally sense the odd flickering effect, although it wasn't annoying enough to spoil the fun. The way the Zapper worked also meant that pointing it at a light-bulb wouldn't do you any good if you wanted to cheat, although sticking it right up near the screen might have helped, if kind of defying the point of the game. The timing issues of the Zapper hardware unfortunately means that *Duck Hunt* won't work on modern LCD TVs.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OUCH !!
SHOOT THE DUCKS, NOT ME !!

» While you can shoot the dog, you can't kill him. Nintendo isn't that mean.

CHICKIN CHASE

COMMODORE 64

■ In this curious Firebird budget title you play a lone rooster in a henhouse. It's down to you to make sure the inmates are laying plenty of eggs by, erm, fertilising lady chickens, while fending off pesky foxes, weasels and snakes. Mess up and the farmer's wife will come chasing after you with a rolling pin and dispatch you to the cooking pot. Ouch. We bet Foghorn Leghorn never had to deal with this sort of thing.

ANGRY BIRDS

VARIOUS

■ Who'd have thought that a game involving catapulting rotund wildfowl at pigs in towers would take over the world? With over two billion downloads across multiple platforms to date, *Angry Birds* is the most successful mobile gaming app franchise ever created, and the biggest thing to come out of Finland since Nokia phones. We're still not sure what those poor piggies did to make those birds so mad, though.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

SNES

■ Anyone who's played a *Zelda* game will no doubt have tried to wallop the domestic chickens (or 'Cuccos') that populate the land of Hyrule at some point. However, *A Link to the Past* introduced an amusing feature where persistent hen-botherers were mobbed by an angry flock of killer poultry, meeting an undignified end beneath dozens of pointy beaks.

THE NEW ZEALAND STORY

ARCADE

■ Taito's cute platform game follows the adventures of Tiki the oddly yellow Kiwi, whose girlfriend and kiwi chums have been kidnapped by leopard seal Wally. Armed with a bow and arrow, he sets off to free them, negotiating balloon rides, spiked mazes, whales and punk teddy-bears on his way. A NES version, programmed by Software Creations, was released by Ocean.

FINAL FANTASY VII

PLAYSTATION

■ First popping up in *Final Fantasy II*, the Chocobo has since become one of the mascots of Square's flagship RPG series. In *FFVII* they take on the appearance of a cross between an ostrich and Woodstock from the Peanuts cartoon strip, and can be bred, raced and ridden across the game world. You can even get hold of a summon spell that drops an enormous fat Chocobo on top of your enemies…

ROAD RUNNER

ARCADE

■ Meep meep! Everyone's favourite cartoon bird made his arcade debut in Atari's take on the famous Looney Tunes shorts. Players take control of the Road Runner (Accelleratii Incredibus) as he zooms through the desert evading Wile E Coyote (Carnivorous Vulgaris) and his various backfiring Acme inventions. Along the way he has to negotiate traffic and scoff plenty of bird seed to avoid becoming dinner.

Duck Hunt comes with three different modes – game A gives you three bullets per duck to shoot at ten targets that rise consecutively from the thicket, the trickier game B gives you the same number of bullets to tackle two ducks flying up at a time, while game C substitutes clay pigeons for wildfowl. Game A also gives you an option for a second player to control the flight path of the ducks in a bid to put off player one, which can lead to a few hearty chuckles. Each mode continues at an increasing difficulty level until players reach round 99, when the game resets to a bugged round 0, featuring spectral ducks that are impossible to hit, echoing *Pac-Man*'s famous 'kill screen'. Another interesting fact about *Duck Hunt* is that its character designer (and the artist behind that famous doggy), Hiroji Kiyotake, went on to create Samus Aran of *Metroid* fame.

And in the latest instalment of *Super Smash Bros*, the snickering mutt is back on Nintendo's latest console, after being on the videogame 'bench' for 30 years. He comes complete with a duck on his back, and special moves that pay homage to other Zapper games including *Wild Gunman* and *Hogan's Alley*. You might not have been able to hit him with your Zapper back in the day on the NES, but now at least you might be able to slap him about a little bit.

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OIL

DONKEY KONG

NINTENDO PROVES WHY IT'S THE KING OF KONG

DONKEY
KONG
✱ 1 PLAYER GAME A
1 PLAYER GAME B
2 PLAYER GAME A
2 PLAYER GAME B

- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- **YEAR:** 1983
- **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES

HISTORY

It's amazing to think that by the time *Donkey Kong* finally arrived on the NES numerous other systems had already found great success with Nintendo's hit arcade game.

Before the NES version arrived, *Donkey Kong* already existed on the likes of the Atari 2600, ColecoVision and Intellivision. It's important to remember that these versions were all released before Nintendo's own console had even been released, so it's hardly surprising that Nintendo wanted a slice of the profits. It's also not surprising to learn that *Donkey Kong* was one of the first games to be released on Nintendo's Famicom (as it was known in Japan) and while it's not the most perfect of ports, it's arguably the best version of the game that was around at the time.

It may be missing an entire level from the arcade game (the cement stage in case you're wondering) but *Donkey Kong* on the NES remains an astonishing port of its arcade parent. This is largely down to the visuals, which do an amazing job of capturing all the character of the original arcade game. The sprites are suitably chunky and there's very little flicker, allowing you to get sucked into the absorbing gameplay in your quest to beat Kong.

Sure there's the odd cutscene missing here and there, but what *Donkey Kong* does have is playability and plenty of it. Jumping barrels, climbing ladders, removing pegs – it's all here and it's all rather awesome. Nintendo's 8-bit console was a huge success with sales of over 60 million and it's all thanks to classic conversions like *Donkey Kong*, which did a great job of highlighting the power of Nintendo's console compared to its competitors. It might not have been complete, but that didn't matter to gamers, who hungrily lapped it up, along with the numerous sequels that were released on the machine in later years.

Interestingly, Nintendo did finally create a complete NES version of *Donkey Kong* in the form of *Donkey Kong: Original Edition*. It wasn't released on the NES though and is instead available as a Virtual Console exclusive. Download it now.

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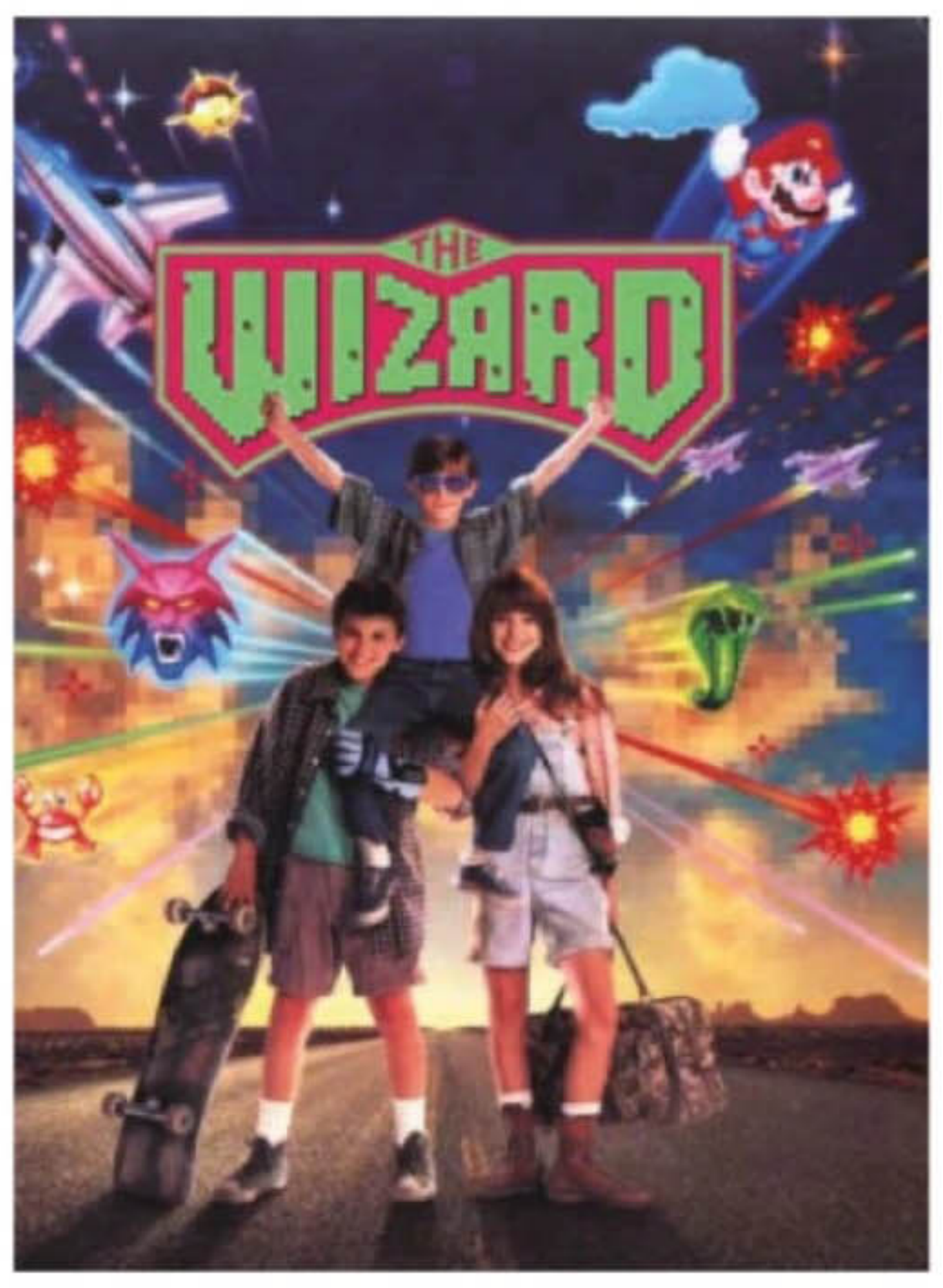
THE WIZARD

We know what you're thinking. Films aren't videogames, so why are we featuring them in this bookazine? What is the world coming to, we hear you cry? Ah, but 1989's The Wizard is a film ABOUT videogames, especially NES videogames. So permit us to take you behind the scenes of this misunderstood classic



» Fred Savage and Mario. Together at last.

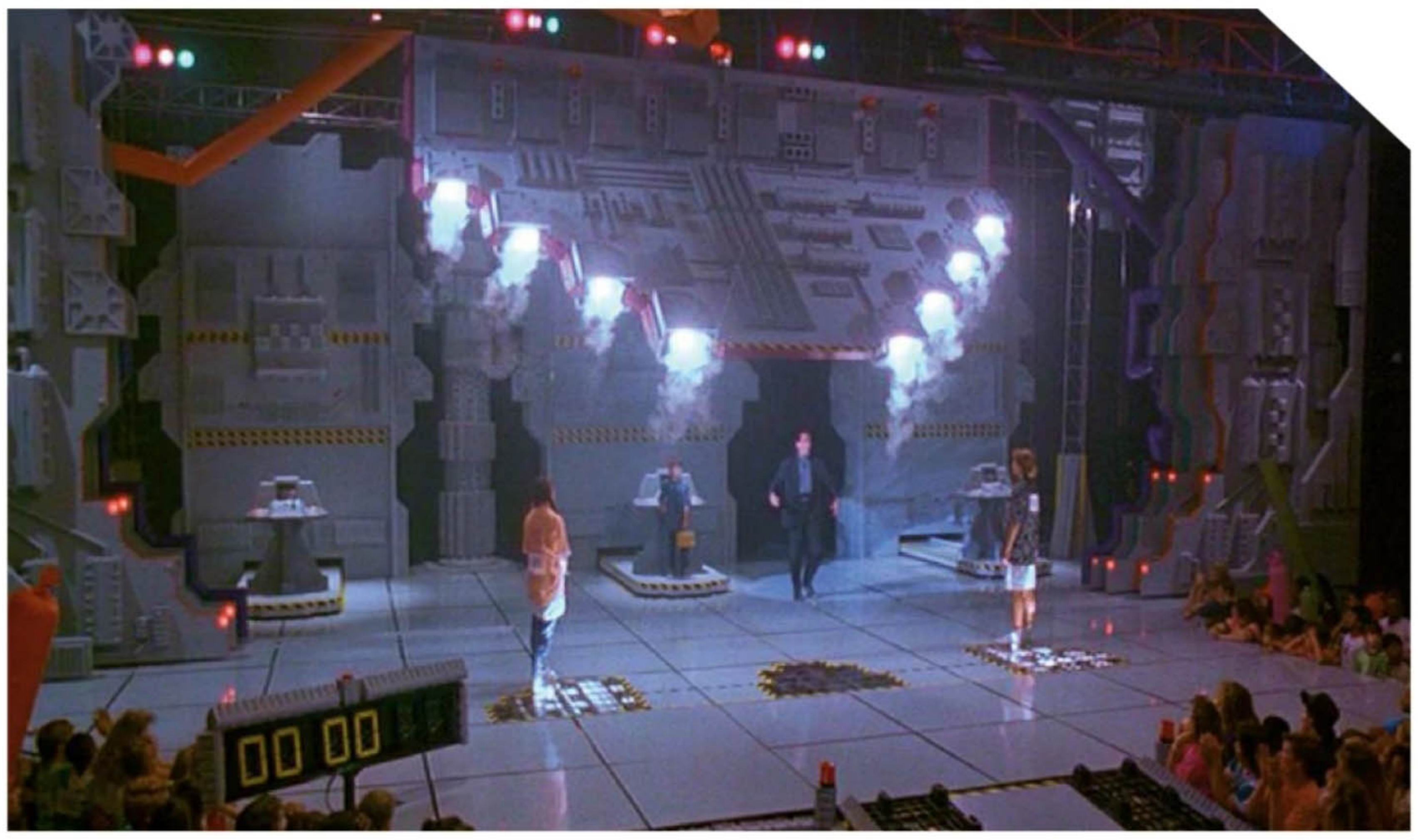
***The Wizard* is very much a guilty pleasure. When the film was released it was panned by critics and flopped at the box office, yet many people still talk about it in hushed, almost revenant tones over 15 years after its release. Although many critics will tell you that it's nothing more than a Nintendo advert masquerading as a 100-minute feature film, just as many people will talk excitedly about Power Gloves, *Ninja Gaiden* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* when asked to give their opinion on this much-maligned popcorn flick. Here at Retro Gamer we fall firmly into the latter camp. *The Wizard* had a profound effect on us, not only because it was the first place we saw *Super Mario Bros 3* in action, but because it's actually pretty good, too.**

Ironically for a film that has an awful lot to do with interactive entertainment, director Todd Holland isn't a huge fan of videogames. "When I was selling myself to Universal Studios to direct the film, I basically said that I hated videogames, so I'm the perfect director for it," he reveals. "If I can make these things interesting to me then I can make them interesting to anyone." Universal obviously agreed because within the space of a weekend Todd was at the helm of the new film. "I read the script on a Thursday, interviewed for the job on Friday, got the job and was prepping the film on Monday."

Todd found that he had little time to get settled before the cameras started to roll. "We were shooting five weeks after I got the job, which is an incredibly short prep for any feature," he comments. "The rush was all about Fred Savage's TV schedule for *The Wonder Years*. He had certain weeks off to shoot the film and therefore we had to start on time." Child star Savage was, at the time of Todd's employment, the only actor attached to the project and the new director quickly began to assemble the rest of the cast. "I hired casting director Mali Finn – later to become very famous for casting all *The Matrix* films, *Titanic* and dozens of other brilliant movies," explains Todd about the important piece of hiring. "I met with Beau and convinced him, and then once I had met with Beau I was able to convince Christian Slater because he was interested in working with Beau, having done a film with his brother, Jeff."

Slater had just come off the back of the uncompromisingly bleak teen movie *Heathers* and was slowly beginning

» Todd: "Universal thought: Fred Savage and Nintendo – two things kids love. Let's put them together and make lots of money."



» Todd: "I concocted the Video Armageddon concept with a production design as close to *Aliens* as I could on my budget."

to turn into a serious Hollywood star. Todd is full of praise for the actor, who remains hard at work in the industry today. "Christian was terrific," he remembers. "He liked to have fun in his time off and slept so late that he had to be shaken awake by a production assistant every morning because no alarm clock could wake him. But he was hard-working and a real team player. He and Beau really were great together."

Beau Bridges is a severely underrated actor accustomed to plying his trade in the shadow of his more famous brother Jeff. Beau had become a vital member of the cast and helped to create the film that Todd ultimately wanted to make. "Beau is the consummate pro," explains Todd. "He was the big movie star in our cast and really raised the bar for everyone. Beau always understood how I wanted the film to work on an emotional level. There were a lot of complex emotional layers suggested in the script, but the trick was to make it all real and keep it at the right level for a family film about videogames. No one was smarter than Beau about finding that level."

Although Slater and Bridges are unquestionably two big Hollywood names, at the time of production Fred Savage was easily the biggest star to be associated with the film. Given the fact that he's long since faded from the spotlight, it's easy to forget just how famous he was at the time. "Everywhere we went while shooting, everyone recognised him," remembers Todd. "People lined the streets in Reno, Nevada as we drove in and girls were screaming Fred's name and hooting and waving. Fred was 12 years old – he turned 13 while we were shooting – and I was always stunned by the grace with which he handled all of that attention."

The casting of Savage's love interest – teenage runaway Haley – caused Todd some headaches. "Universal had a Texas beauty queen-type that they really wanted," he remembers. "She really wasn't up to the role acting-wise. I had a fantastic young actress, whose name I cannot recall, that Universal felt wasn't cute enough. So we were at an impasse. Then seemingly out of the blue Mali Finn found this young girl named Jenny Lewis. Jenny was terrific, such a gifted actress and a great kid." Industry experts will sarcastically comment that one of the unwritten rules of Hollywood is to never work with kids, but Todd is very positive about his two young leads. "I had a really good time working with Jenny and Fred," he remembers. "Jenny had a very natural style that was very intuitive. Fred was more cultivated, having had years delivering 'emotional truth' day after day on *The Wonder Years*. Their blend of styles was very effective."

However, arguably the most moving performance came from the nine-year-old Luke Edwards, who played the titular videogame 'wizard' Jimmy. "Luke did a great job," comments Todd. "It was not an easy role. The backstory of his character was complex and quite frankly, dark. This was a boy whose twin sister had drowned before his own eyes. Savage's character is his half-brother, but they're separated after his Mum's second marriage ended in divorce. That's quite a mess for a nine-year-old actor to process, so I just tried to keep things simple and help Luke find the end result, without necessarily understanding the entire emotional context of the scene."

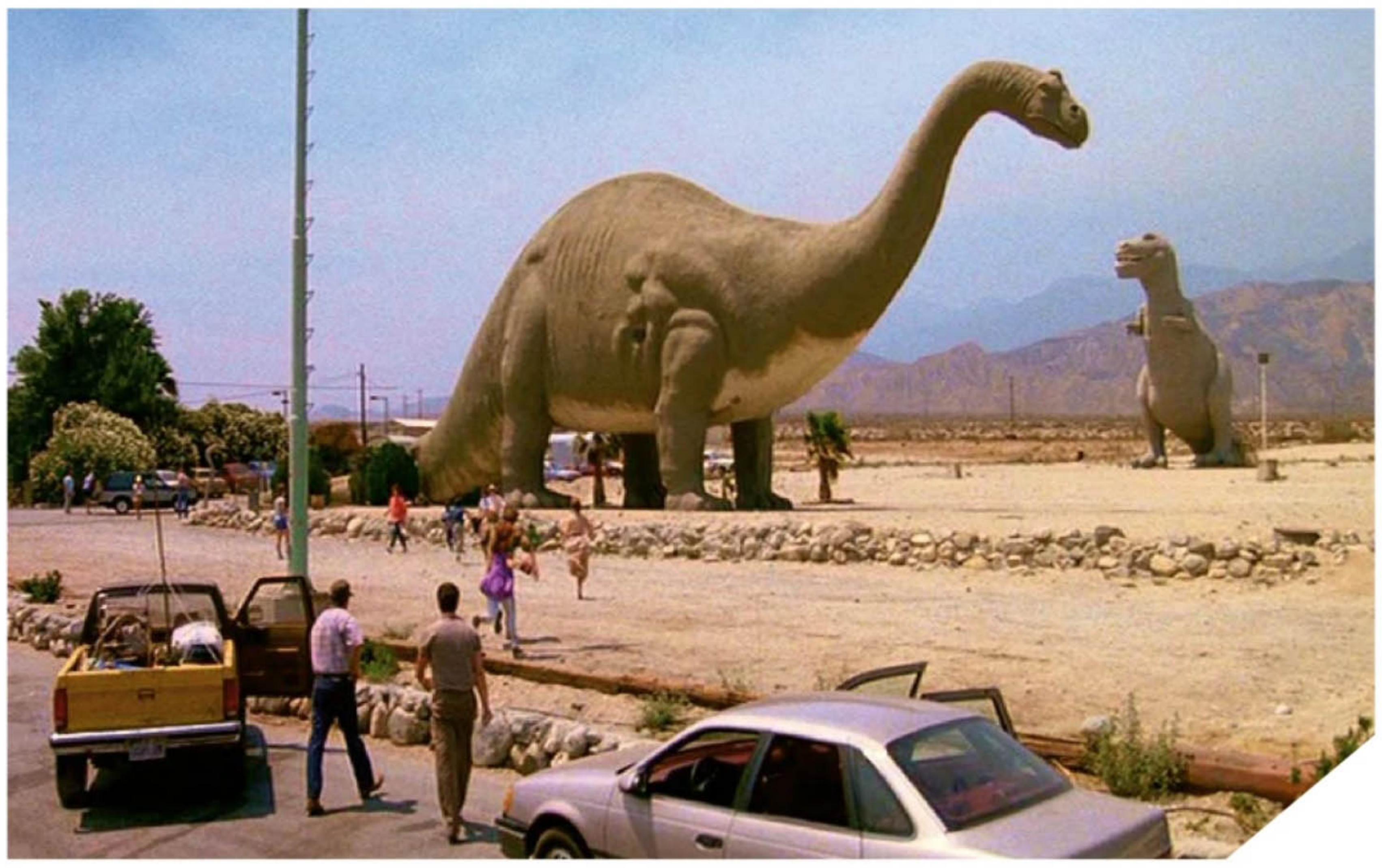
Amazingly, Nintendo was refreshingly 'hands off' with the film-making process, but as Todd explains, this was more

"PEOPLE LINED THE STREETS IN RENO, NEVADA AS WE DROVE IN AND GIRLS WERE SCREAMING FRED SAVAGE'S NAME AND HOOTING AND WAVING. HE WAS ONLY 12 YEARS OLD AT THE TIME" TODD HOLLAND

» Todd: "I still love the image of the that last giant door opening and little Jimmy appearing when you thought all hope was lost."

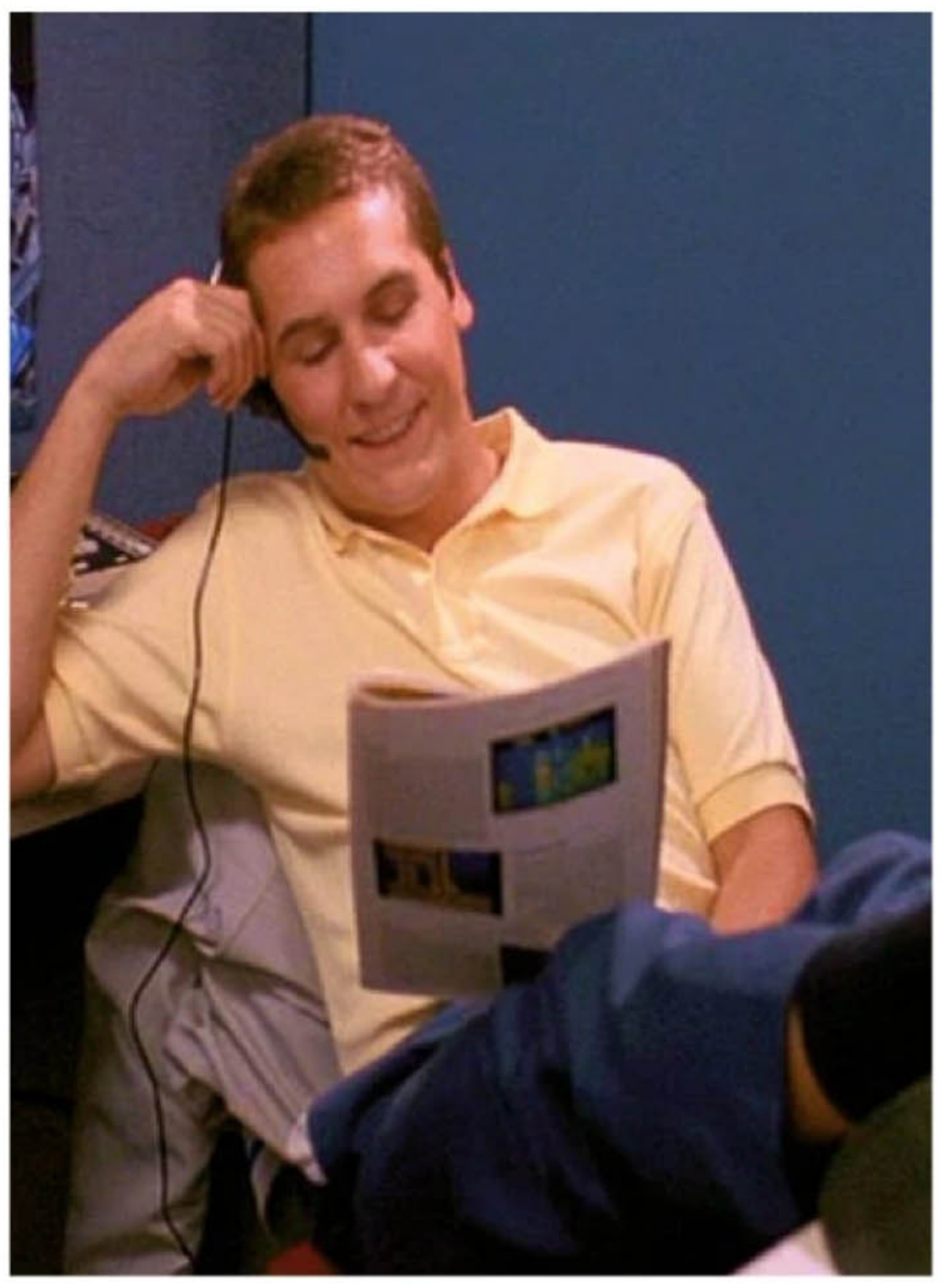
» The infamous Power Glove scene – villain of the piece Lucas Barton gives a demo of the controller with *Rad Racer.*

» The Palm Springs dinosaurs, which provided the backdrop for the emotional finale of the movie.



HIT THE ROAD

The Wizard is essentially a road movie, and for Todd that meant scouting for shooting locations. This in itself was quite a task given the distance the script dictated they should cover. "The small town in the film where the main characters live was Fallon, Nevada. What was hilarious is that in the prep stage of the film, we went to Fallon and I wandered over to the general store of sorts, with these old locals hanging out on the porch. I smiled and said 'Hello', and one old guy speaks up and the first words out of his mouth are, 'Scouting locations, are ya?' I did this double take because I realised how film savvy these folks really were. From Fallon we travelled to Reno, shooting roadwork all along the way. That was what made the film so exhausting to scout – you couldn't sleep in the van because every piece of road between one location and the next was another possible location."



» Yes, that is Toby Maguire on the left. Todd: "I had no idea he was in the film until years later. I just wish I'd kept his number!"

to do with the era than anything else, "Those were more innocent times and it was still news to have a movie embrace such commercial elements. Today, no one even blinks at *Transformers* being a wall-to-wall General Motors commercial. We expect on–screen characters to be drinking Coca-Cola and using Apple computers, just like we expect Jack Bauer to dial on his Nokia-brand phone. That's just the way everything is done now, but that kind of product placement was news back then."

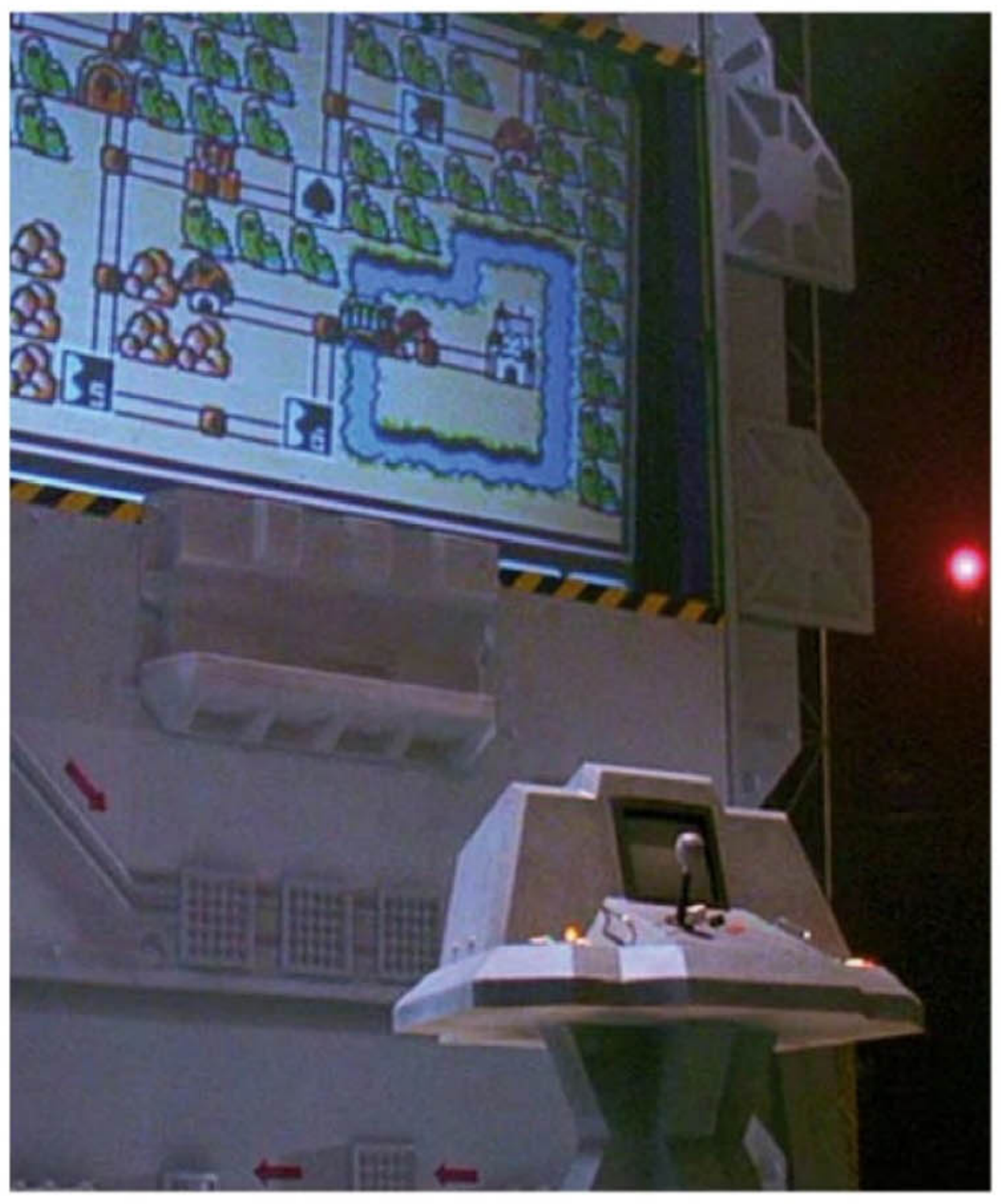
Regardless of this, Todd is keen to point out that he received plenty of assistance from the Japanese videogames giant. "Nintendo co-operated fully," he remarks. "Naturally they had products they wanted to promote, like *Super Mario Bros 3* and the Power Glove. It wasn't like we had to say yes, but we weren't complaining either. Those products fitted nicely into our script. We were, after all, making a 'videogame' movie, so, much like those General Motors cars in *Transformers*, we were a good fit with Nintendo. They certainly never told us to change the script in any way."

Arguably the most famous scene in the entire movie involves the infamous Power Glove controller, and the immortal line – "I love the Power Glove. It's so bad" – delivered by the film's odious villain Lucas Barton. Although it is now widely regarded as one of the most derided peripherals in the history of videogames, there wasn't a gamer on the face of the planet that didn't desire one after watching *The Wizard*. "It was a no-brainer to put the Power Glove into the spotlight, especially to empower our slick villain and put our heroes at a disadvantage thanks to his greater skill, knowledge and experience," Todd says about the decision to use the now maligned peripheral. "While Nintendo never told us to feature the Glove, they did send a representative to the set to watch over it, as it was very top secret at the time. They also made sure we presented it in the proper light."

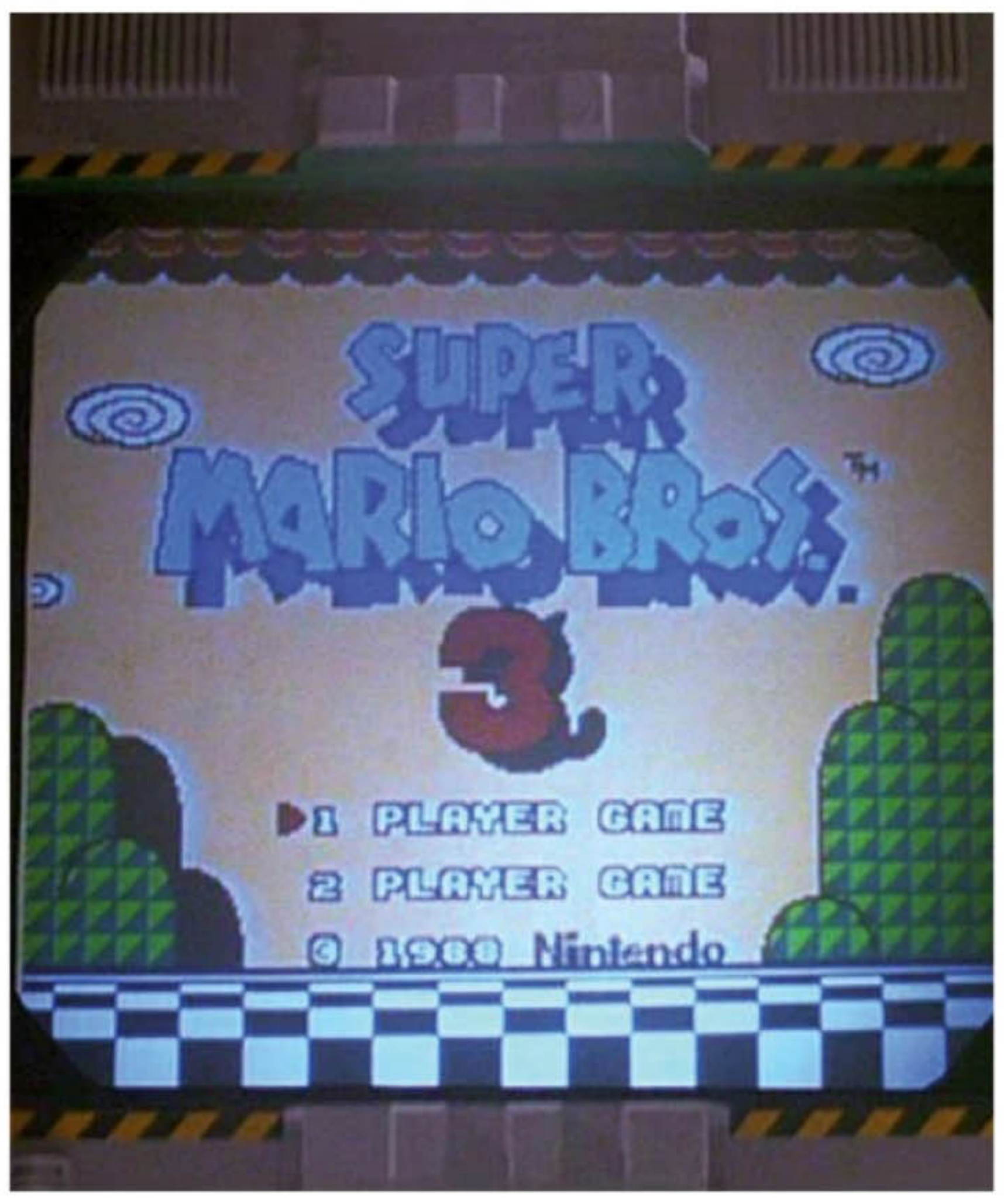
As is the case with all feature films, it wasn't smooth running all of the time. In fact, Todd had several major issues to deal with during the production of the movie – the script being the most concerning issue of all. "The script was way too long," explains Todd. "I argued with the studio that we were shooting way too much footage – more than we could ever possibly need to use – and that just makes everything harder and is incredibly wasteful. But I was a young nobody. I lost the argument and was told flat out by Universal to shoot the entire script." Todd had the last laugh, but it was a hollow victory. "The first assembly of all the footage was two-and-a-half hours long. I ended up cutting an hour out of the film for my director's cut just to reach a length that was suitable for a family film."

> "NINTENDO HAD PRODUCTS IT WANTED TO PROMOTE, LIKE SUPER MARIO BROS 3 AND THE POWER GLOVE, THAT FITTED NICELY INTO OUR SCRIPT" TODD HOLLAND

» Jimmy does his thing at Video Armageddon. Note the lunchbox between his legs as he plays – this seemingly insignificant item would prove to be integral to Todd's revisited storyline.



» Todd: "The Video Armageddon interiors were all shot at Cal Arts University in their big modular auditorium."



» *The Wizard* was the first place that many gamers saw *Super Mario Bros 3* in action.

The quality of the script also created problems. "I liked it when I first read it," recalls Todd. "But I always wanted more. I pushed for a lot of changes. In the original script, Jimmy wanders for no reason and he never says anything to anyone. I wanted Jimmy to have a secret purpose. All he really wanted was to take his dead sister's remains – that lunchbox full of her stuff and pictures of their family – back to the last place he could remember them all being happy together. I decided that that place would be these full-scale replica dinosaurs on the freeway outside Palm Springs. The family would learn the truth, and come to a new understanding and appreciation of Jimmy as a deeply wounded boy desperately needing to do one last thing for his dead sister in order to find closure for his grief. And from this emotional catharsis, all their wounds as a broken family could begin to be rebuilt."

Todd's proposed rewrite was tentatively approved but it wasn't the end to the tension that surrounded the production of the film. "My relationship with the producer and Universal fell apart," he laments. "I'd argued too loudly and from there it all went downhill. It was one fight after another. There was enormous mistrust all around. I had lost all support with the writer, producer and studio."

This mistrust led to many on-set battles and eventually culminated in the final scene being hastily reworked by Todd. By this stage Universal had expressed doubts about the script rewrites and had informed the director that much of his new material would be cut once filming had been completed. Amazingly, the poignant and moving final scene, where Jimmy puts the memory of his dead sister to rest, was written by the director the night before it was shot and never got the approval of the producers or the studio. "I had the only copy of the revised text – because I had written it the night before – and so I just told each of the actors what to say in rehearsal. That is what we shot and that is the ending of the film as it exists today." The gamble paid off as test audiences reacted extremely positively to the more emotional plot line and the tear-jerking final scene inside the hollow interior of the Palm Springs dinosaur. "There was never another attack on that storyline after my first director's cut preview of the film," comments Todd with a wry grin.

Sadly, for all Todd's effort and despite the considerable pulling power of both Fred Savage and the Nintendo brand, the film wasn't the financial success that Universal hoped for. "It cost $6 million to make, a low budget even then," says Todd. "It made $13 million at the box office, but everyone was expecting that 'Fred Savage/Nintendo – how can we lose?' equation to pay off big time, so $13 million was a disappointment. I couldn't get a job for seven months after that."

His film may have been critically attacked and flopped at the box office, but Todd nevertheless harbours fond memories of making the *The Wizard*. "I loved my cast," he says with a smile. "We really had fun together." But does the director still maintain his indifference to videogames? "I asked for an Xbox 360 last Christmas as I was really hooked on the TV ads for *Gears Of War*, but I'm really busy with work and I have to confess I never have time to play, so I totally suck at it."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Fred Savage (Corey Woods) – Now working as a fully fledged director of film and television productions. Savage's directorial movie debut was 2007's *Daddy Day Camp*.

Luke Edwards (Jimmy Woods) – Still working as an actor, Luke has appeared in numerous television roles as well as 2003's *Jeepers Creepers 2*.

Jenny Lewis (Haley) – After leaving the acting profession in 2001, Lewis now fronts the successful American indie-rock band Rilo Kiley.

Beau Bridges (Sam Woods) – Since 1989 Beau has appeared in more films and television shows than you've had hot dinners, and is still well worth watching.

Christian Slater (Nick Woods) – Slater has struggled with alcohol and drug problems over the past decade. One of his recent films was the lamentable *Alone In The Dark*.

Todd Holland (Director) – Holland continues to direct movies and television shows, and has been involved with *Malcolm In The Middle, The Larry Sanders Show* and *Friends*.

» Todd Holland chews the fat with Christian Slater and Beau Bridges during the amusing motel scene.

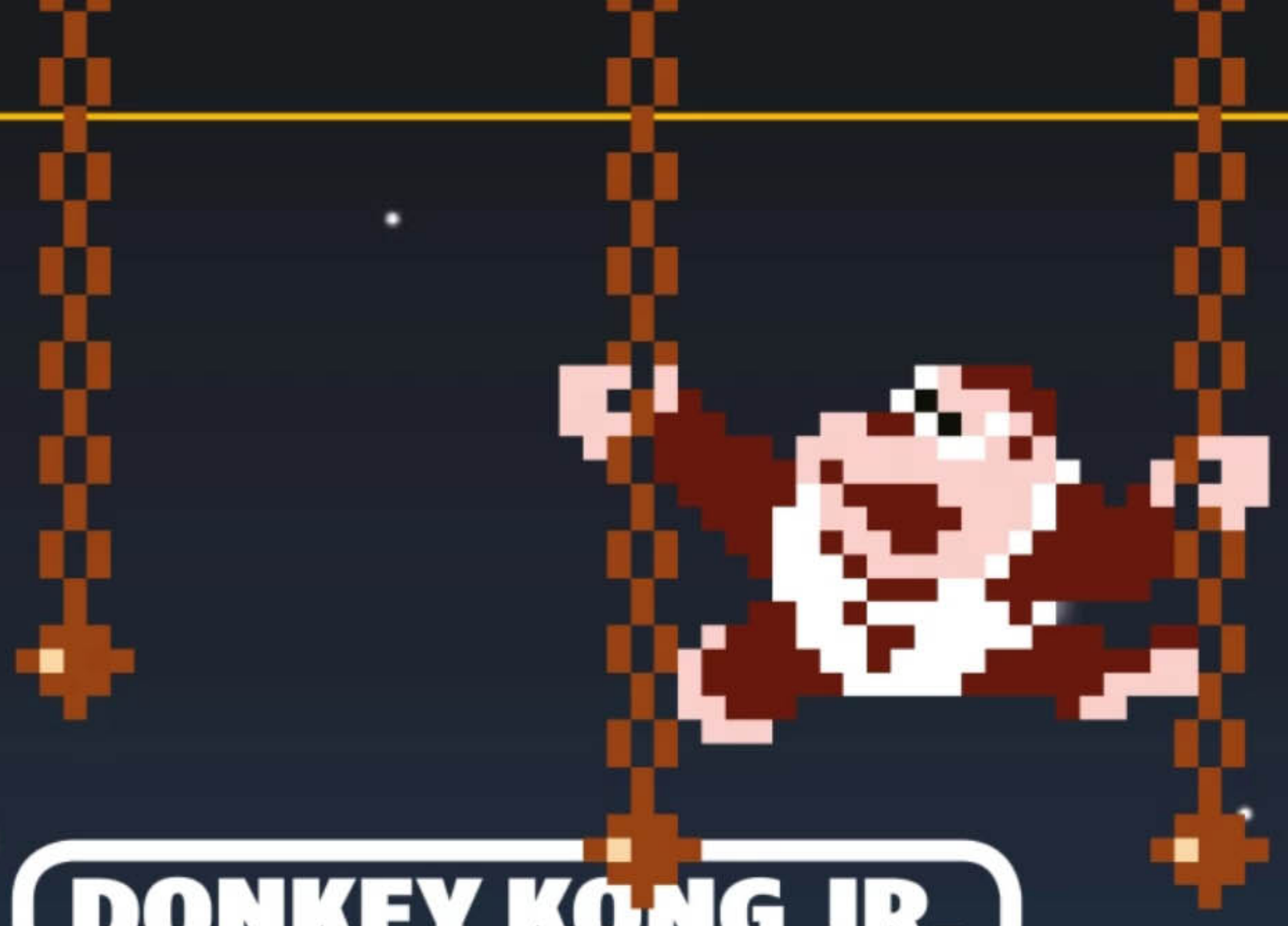
» Due to Nintendo's involvement, the majority of the games shown in the film were NES releases.

NES

NOW EVEN SMALLER

What better way to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the NES than by putting it back on store shelves? Luke Albigés and Nick Thorpe revisit the 30 awesome games that we played when the Nintendo Classics Mini: NES launched…

Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
1
2
POWER
RESET
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
NINTENDO CLASSIC MINI
30 GAMES
30 JEUX
FOR USE WITH:
POUR :
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
CONTROLLER
NINTENDO CLASSIC MINI

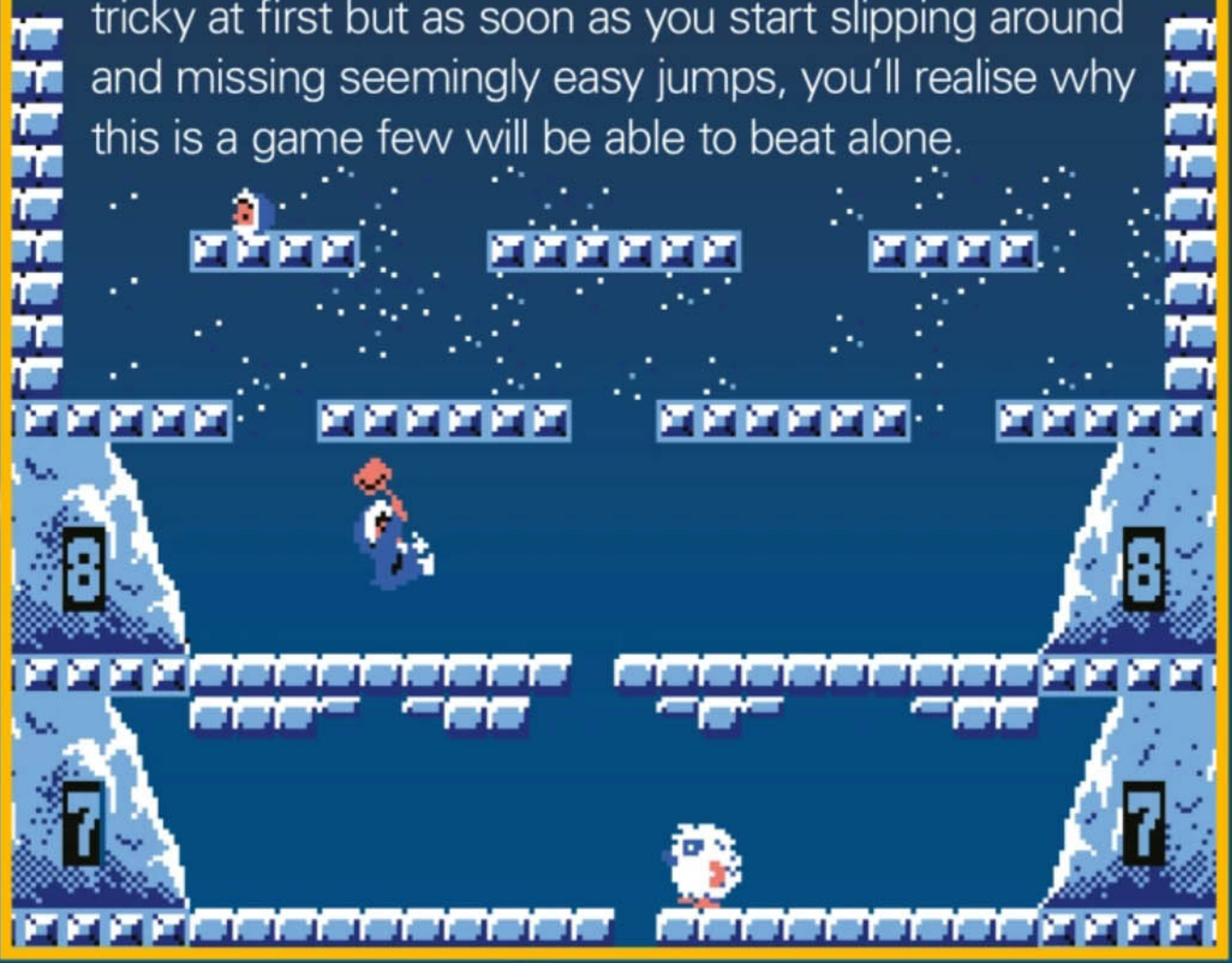


ICE CLIMBER

SMASH THE SYSTEM

NINTENDO, 1985

One of the most interesting characters in the *Smash Bros.* roster, Ice Climbers were based on the idea of having both co-op clamberers work as a single unit, and it worked brilliantly. Co-op is undoubtedly the best way to enjoy *Ice Climber*, as you're able to make far quicker progress through the various floors as a duo than alone. It doesn't seem tricky at first but as soon as you start slipping around and missing seemingly easy jumps, you'll realise why this is a game few will be able to beat alone.



DONKEY KONG JR.

FATHER KNOWS BEST

NINTENDO, 1987

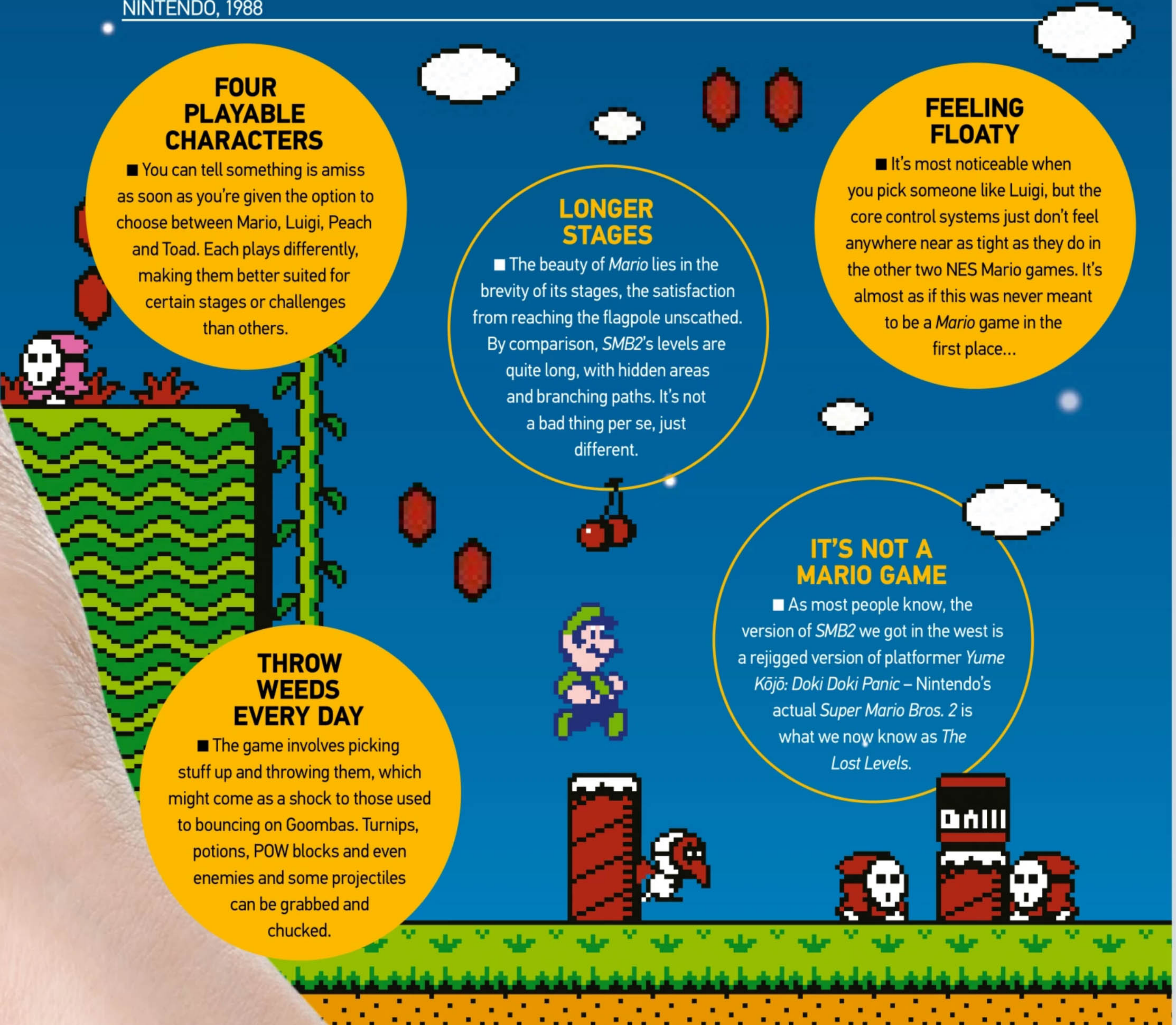
In a role reversal of the original *Donkey Kong*, this acrobatic adventure sends DK's son off to rescue his old man from the clutches of Mario, the goodie-two-shoes Nintendo mascot's only antagonistic role, no less. As an arcade game first and foremost, it's frustratingly difficult at times – minimal fall damage is enough for the young Kong to lose a life, for instance, and the fact that the kill screen kicks in at level 22 tells you exactly how far you should expect to get. Interestingly, the white vest suggests that this is the version of *Donkey Kong* that is playable in the original *Super Mario Kart*.

SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

PLUMBING ISSUES

Five ways to tell this ain't your ordinary Mario adventure

NINTENDO, 1988



FOUR PLAYABLE CHARACTERS

■ You can tell something is amiss as soon as you're given the option to choose between Mario, Luigi, Peach and Toad. Each plays differently, making them better suited for certain stages or challenges than others.

LONGER STAGES

■ The beauty of *Mario* lies in the brevity of its stages, the satisfaction from reaching the flagpole unscathed. By comparison, *SMB2*'s levels are quite long, with hidden areas and branching paths. It's not a bad thing per se, just different.

FEELING FLOATY

■ It's most noticeable when you pick someone like Luigi, but the core control systems just don't feel anywhere near as tight as they do in the other two NES Mario games. It's almost as if this was never meant to be a *Mario* game in the first place…

THROW WEEDS EVERY DAY

■ The game involves picking stuff up and throwing them, which might come as a shock to those used to bouncing on Goombas. Turnips, potions, POW blocks and even enemies and some projectiles can be grabbed and chucked.

IT'S NOT A MARIO GAME

■ As most people know, the version of *SMB2* we got in the west is a rejigged version of platformer *Yume Kōjō: Doki Doki Panic* – Nintendo's actual *Super Mario Bros. 2* is what we now know as *The Lost Levels*.

FIRST-PARTY CLASSICS

Some of the included games are classics – they need no introduction

MARIO BROS.

NINTENDO, 1983

■ While the original Mario game was *technically* a port, the fact that the arcade and Famicom versions came out within two months of each other means it's just as much a NES game in spirit. A simple single-screen battle of plumber-versus-pest, it's perhaps the sole example we have of Nintendo's mascot actually doing his job.

METROID

NINTENDO, 1986

■ Samus' debut adventure helped create an entire genre, one where exploration was crucial and previously inaccessible areas may be reached later once the requisite powers have been obtained. Games like *Dark Souls* are lauded today for eschewing hand-holding and promoting exploration – things *Metroid* was doing 30 years ago.

SUPER MARIO BROS.

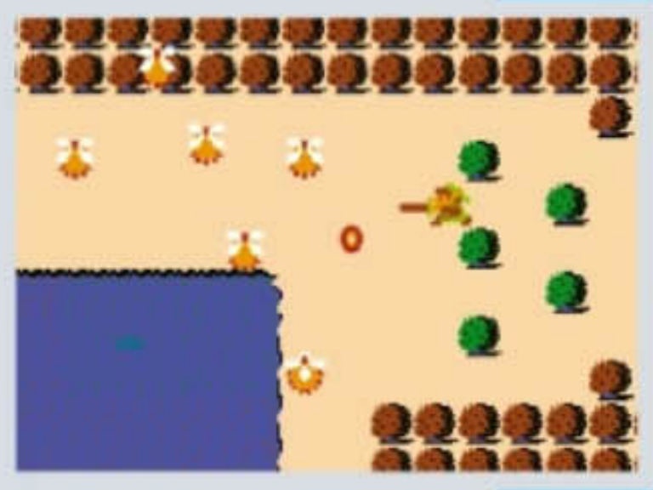
NINTENDO, 1985

■ The classic platformer needs no introduction – it popularised the scrolling platformer, made waves with its great music and presentation and served to launch the career of Nintendo's mustachioed mascot. Speedrunners have clocked the game in under five minutes… how quickly can *you* clear *SMB*?

SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

NINTENDO, 1988

■ A perennial NES favourite, thanks in no small part to some exceptional level design, an open-plan structure and production values that few other titles on the system can rival. Some consider it the best game in the entire series – an argument that certainly carries weight, as it's just as enjoyable today as it was at launch.



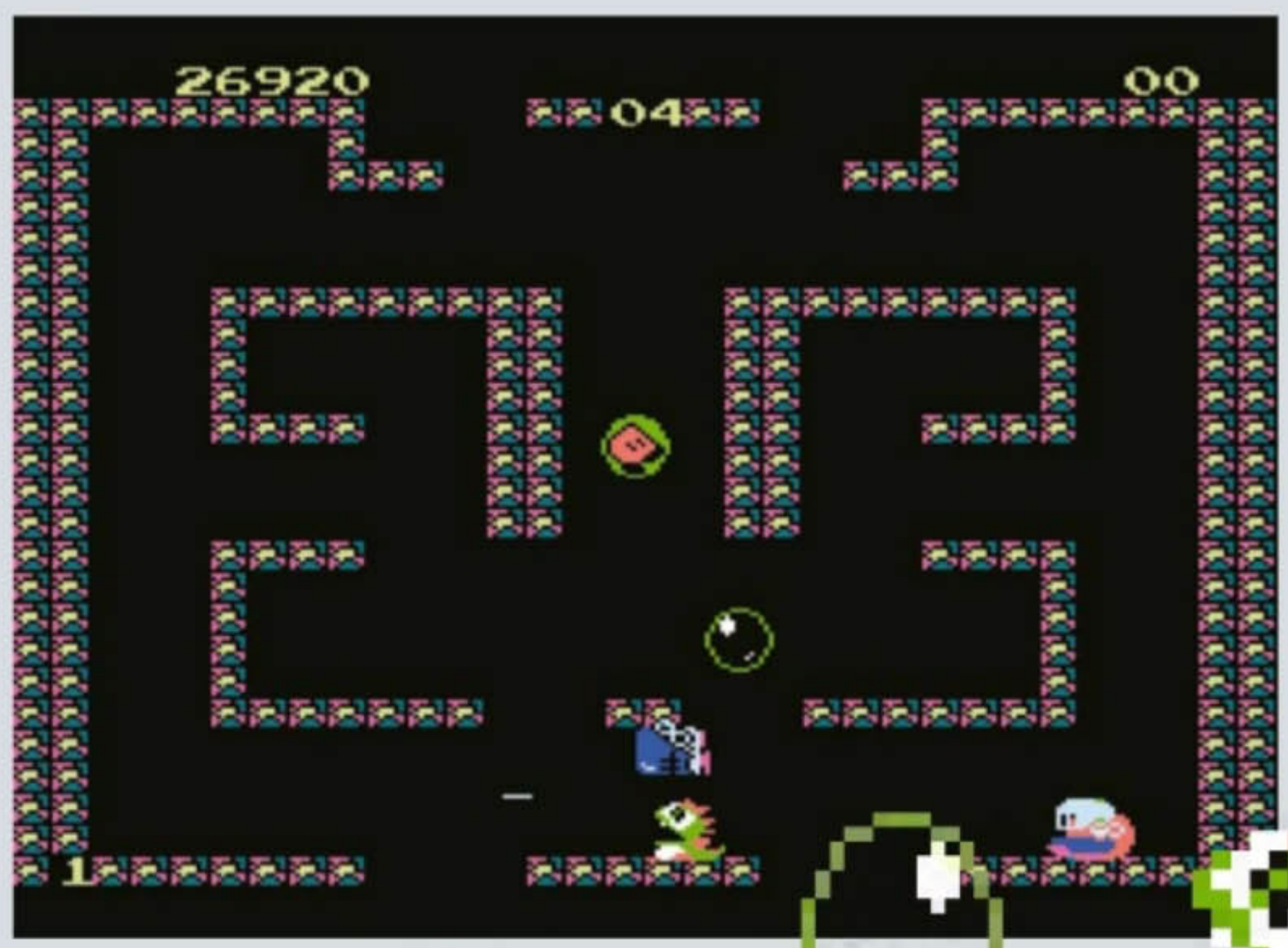
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

NINTENDO, 1986

■ The origins of Nintendo's classic action-RPG series may look completely alien to those who joined the party amid the *Ocarina Of Time* hype bonanza, but those who loved *Link's Awakening* and *A Link To The Past* owe it to themselves to see where the seeds for those amazing games were first sown.

ARCADE HITS

The Classic Mini features conversions of some coin-op classics – here's how they fare on the 8-bit machine

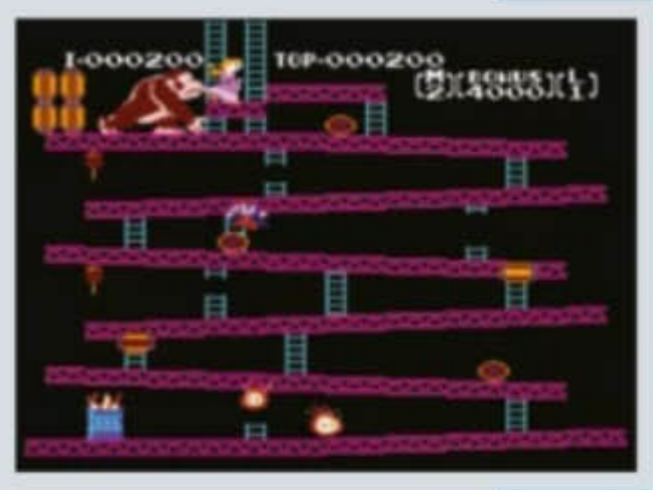


BUBBLE BOBBLE

TAITO, 1988

■ While the visuals are a little less colourful, this conversion of Taito's single-screen platformer plays very accurately and has 12 extra stages. There's also a nice password system to help you get through the game's large number of screens. This was a good conversion at the time, and that's still true.

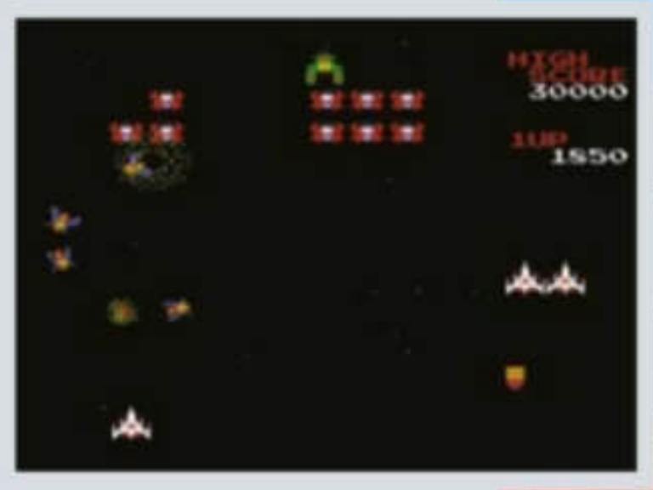
DONKEY KONG



NINTENDO, 1983

■ As is to be expected of a flagship Nintendo game, *Donkey Kong* looks good and plays very well. However, the original cartridge version was missing the cement factory stage – Nintendo has since produced an updated NES version that restores it, but we don't know if it's being used for this system yet.

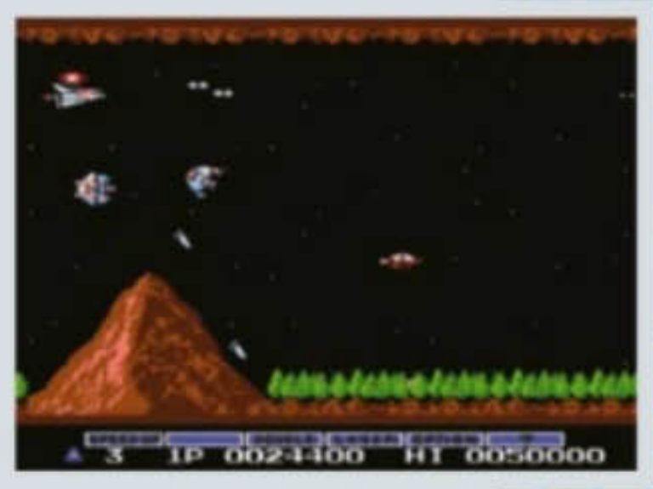
GALAGA



NAMCO, 1985

■ This is solid conversion work from Namco, as the game features some odd sprite colouring but plays very faithfully to the arcade original. Interestingly, the game no longer ends at level 256. If you're a fan of the game but never played the NES version, this conversion will still serve you well.

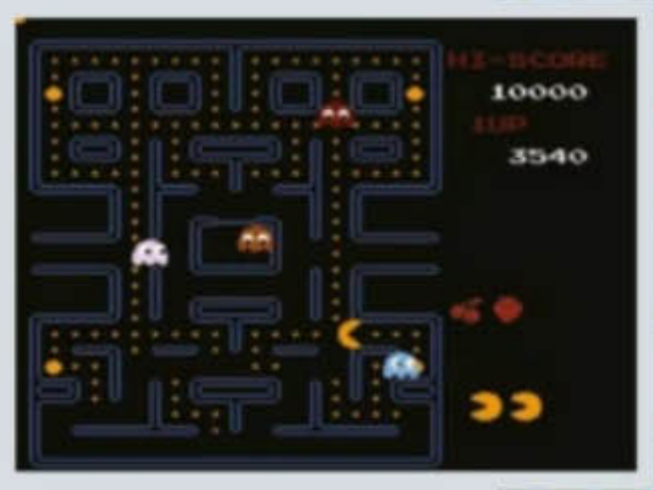
GRADIUS



KONAMI, 1986

■ One of the less accurate conversions here due to the limitations of the NES, *Gradius* features simplified visuals and some slight mechanical changes such as a limit of two Option drones. Taken on its own merits, it's still a good shoot-'em-up with a lot of nostalgic appeal for NES fans who picked it up back in the day.

PAC-MAN



NAMCO, 1984

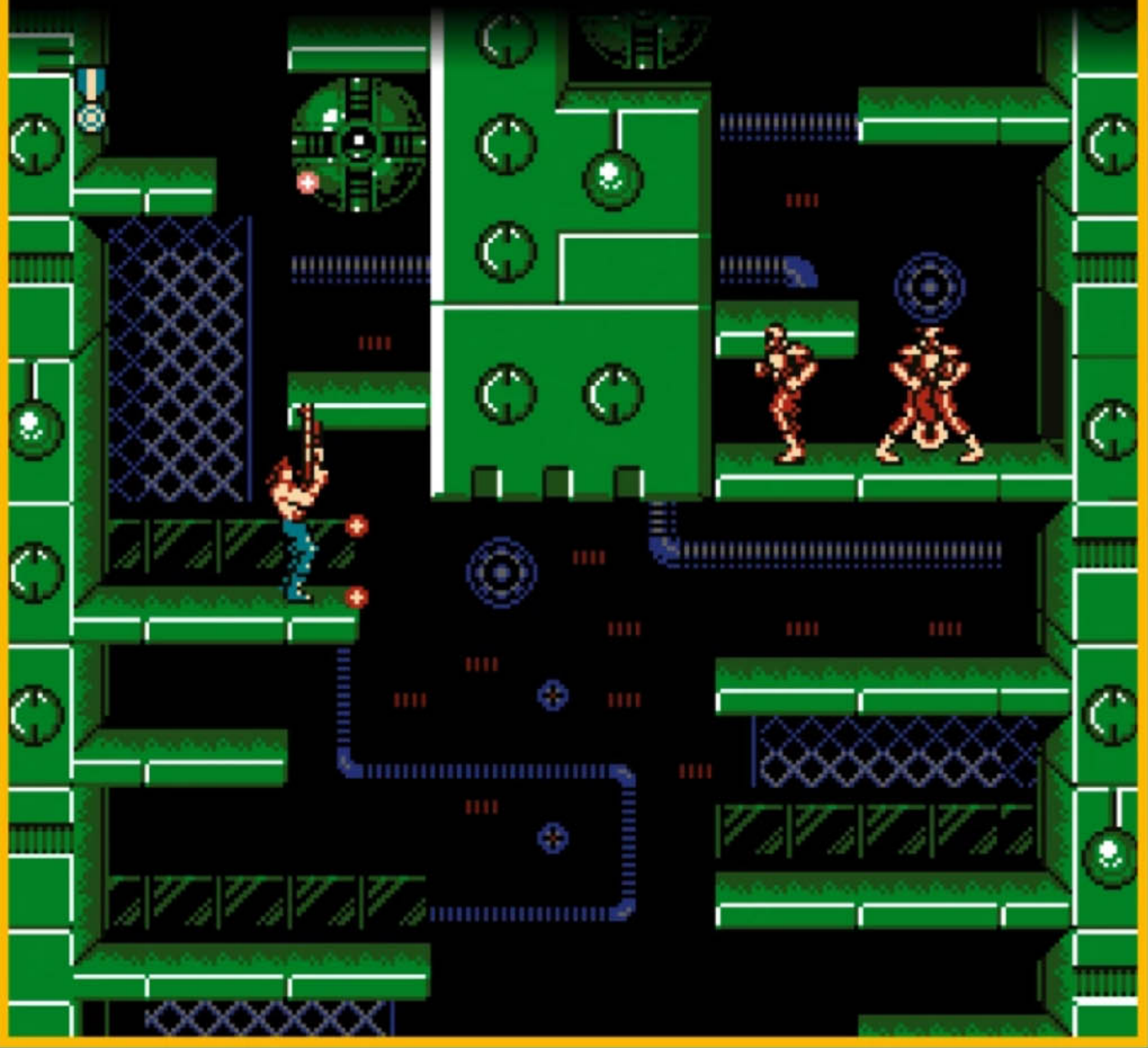
■ As you'd expect, the NES handled a simple game like *Pac-Man* very well. It's not quite arcade perfect, mind – the colours are a little different to the coin-op, the maze is slightly smaller and there's no kill screen. However, in every other respect this is an accurate conversion of Namco's classic maze game.

SUPER C

PROBOTECT THIS!

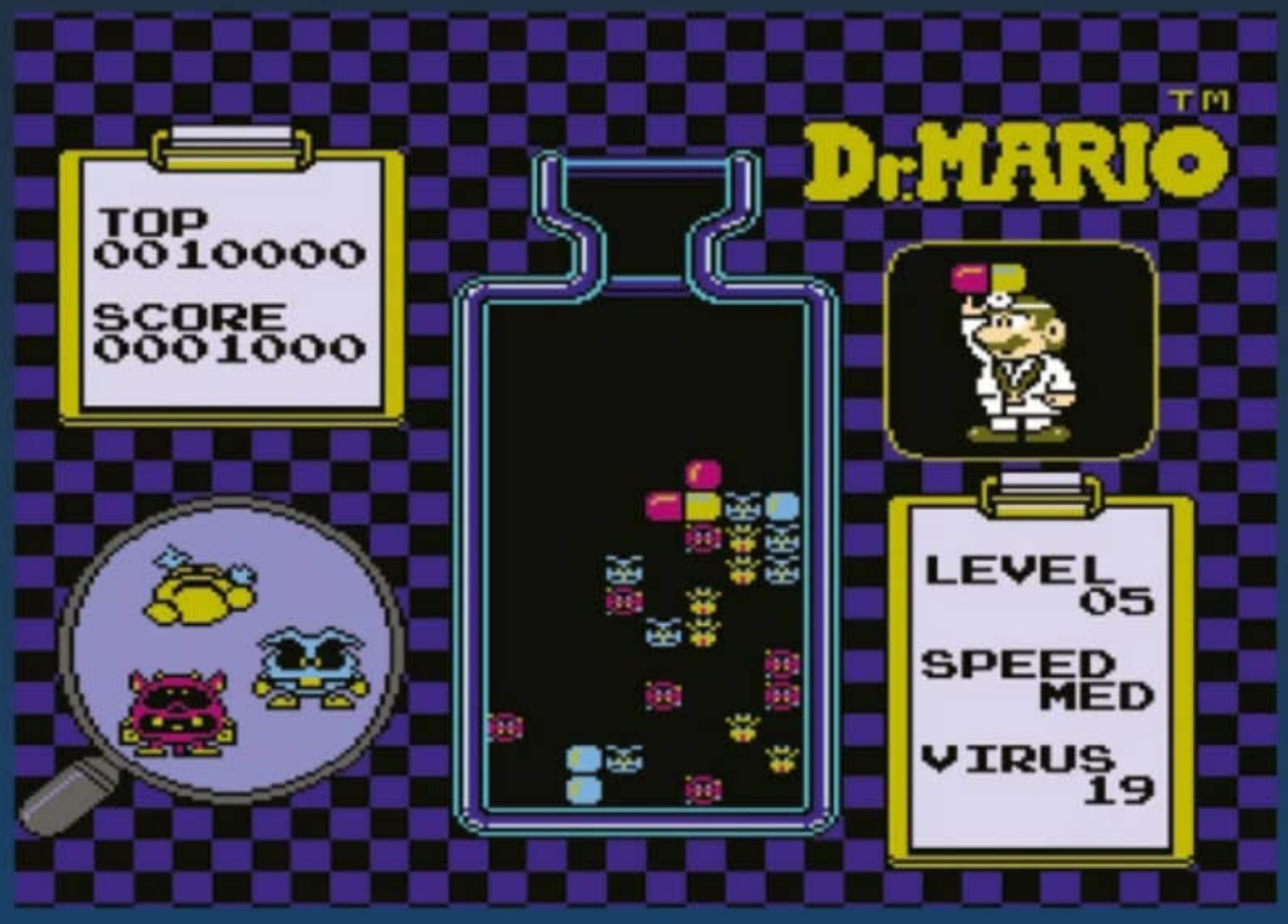
KONAMI, 1990

Back in the Eighties and early Nineties, the *Contra* series was in the middle of an identity crisis. But whether you know it as *Probotector, Contra, Gryzor* or indeed something as abstract as *Super C* (as this sequel is called), the action is all the same even though the names might be different wherever you go – walk right (running is a schoolboy error, as it triggers more enemies than you'll comfortably be able to deal with) and blast the crap out of anything that moves, and most things that don't. This series has a reputation for being difficult and *Super C* lives up to it. In fact, it's so hard that it feels like the off *Alien*-inspired later levels are a joke you were never really meant to see. If you can reach that point without cheating, we doff our collective caps to you.



DR. MARIO

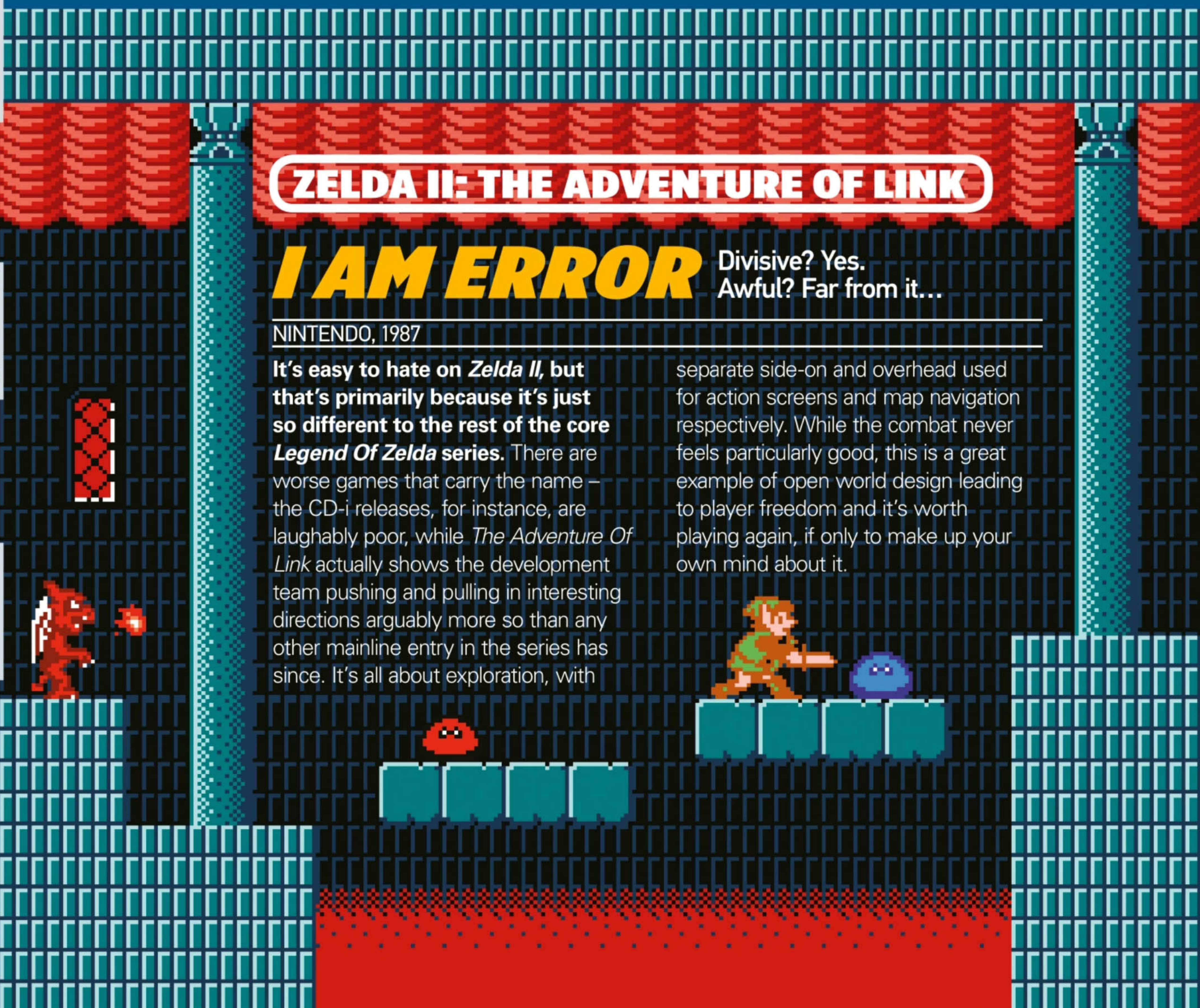
PILLS FOR YOUR ADDICTION?



NINTENDO, 1990

Every compilation of games needs a good puzzle game, and Gunpei Yokoi's exploration of Mario's extra-curricular bacteria-busting exploits is one of the best choices on the NES. Unlike most falling block puzzles, which rely on you to provide both the problem and the solution, Dr. Mario tasks you with using pills to eliminate viruses that start off on the playfield. This instantly sets the game apart from *Tetris, Puyo Puyo* and *Columns*.

You can take on the game solo or play competitively against a second player – in the latter case, you can hinder your opponent with junk pills. In either case, the game has all the hallmarks of a top-quality puzzler, with good potential for combos, neat incidental animations and iconic music that will bore its way into your subconscious and pester you for weeks.



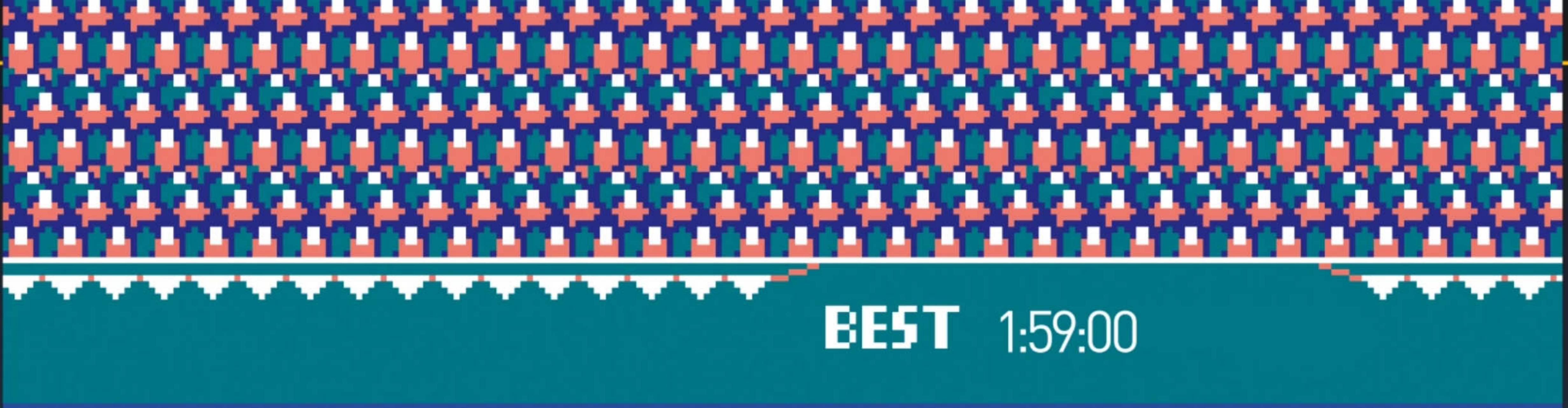
ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK

I AM ERROR

Divisive? Yes.
Awful? Far from it…

NINTENDO, 1987

It's easy to hate on *Zelda II*, but that's primarily because it's just so different to the rest of the core *Legend Of Zelda* series. There are worse games that carry the name – the CD-i releases, for instance, are laughably poor, while *The Adventure Of Link* actually shows the development team pushing and pulling in interesting directions arguably more so than any other mainline entry in the series has since. It's all about exploration, with separate side-on and overhead used for action screens and map navigation respectively. While the combat never feels particularly good, this is a great example of open world design leading to player freedom and it's worth playing again, if only to make up your own mind about it.

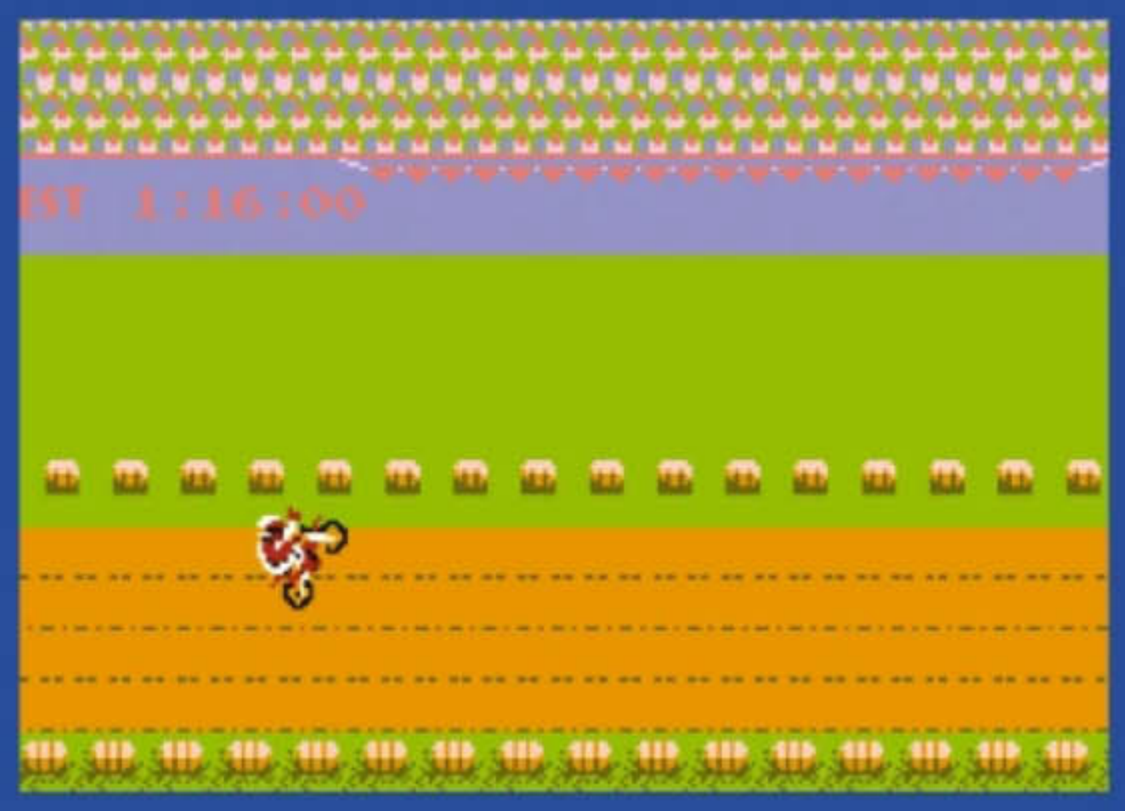


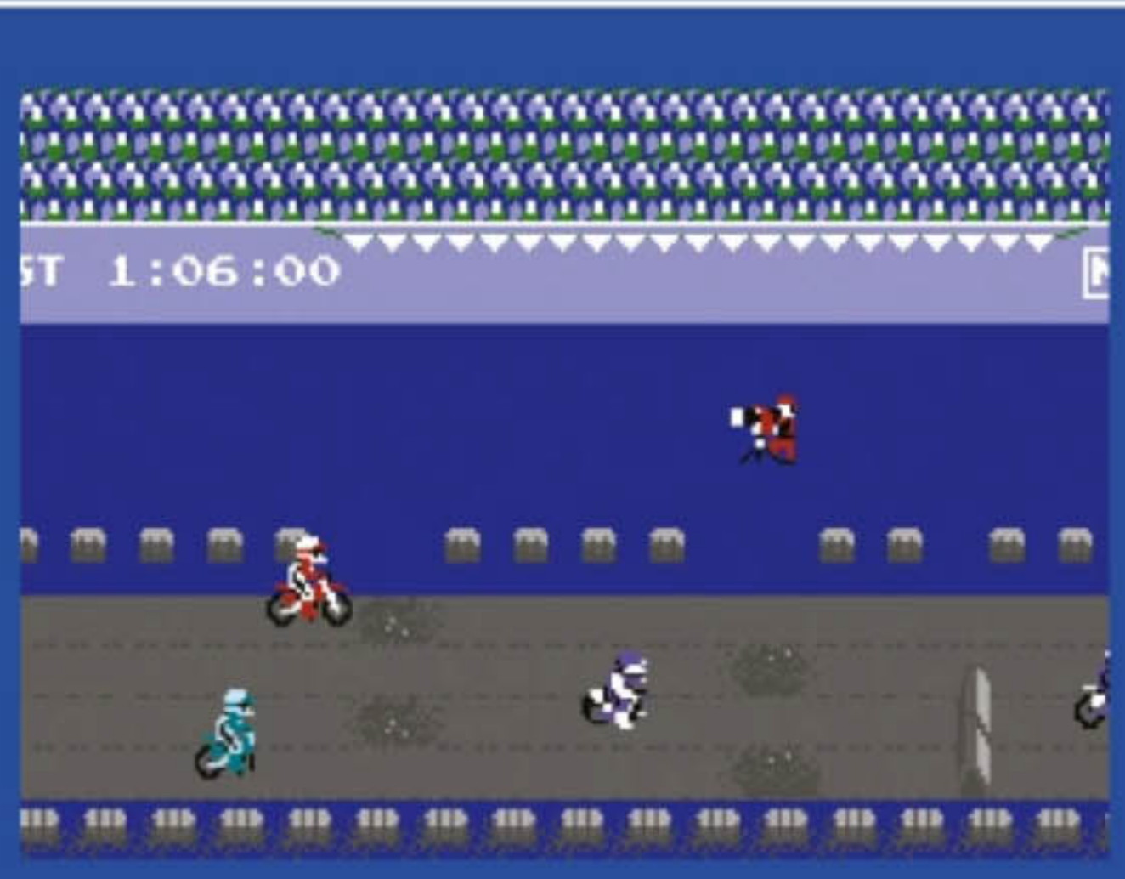
EXCITEBIKE

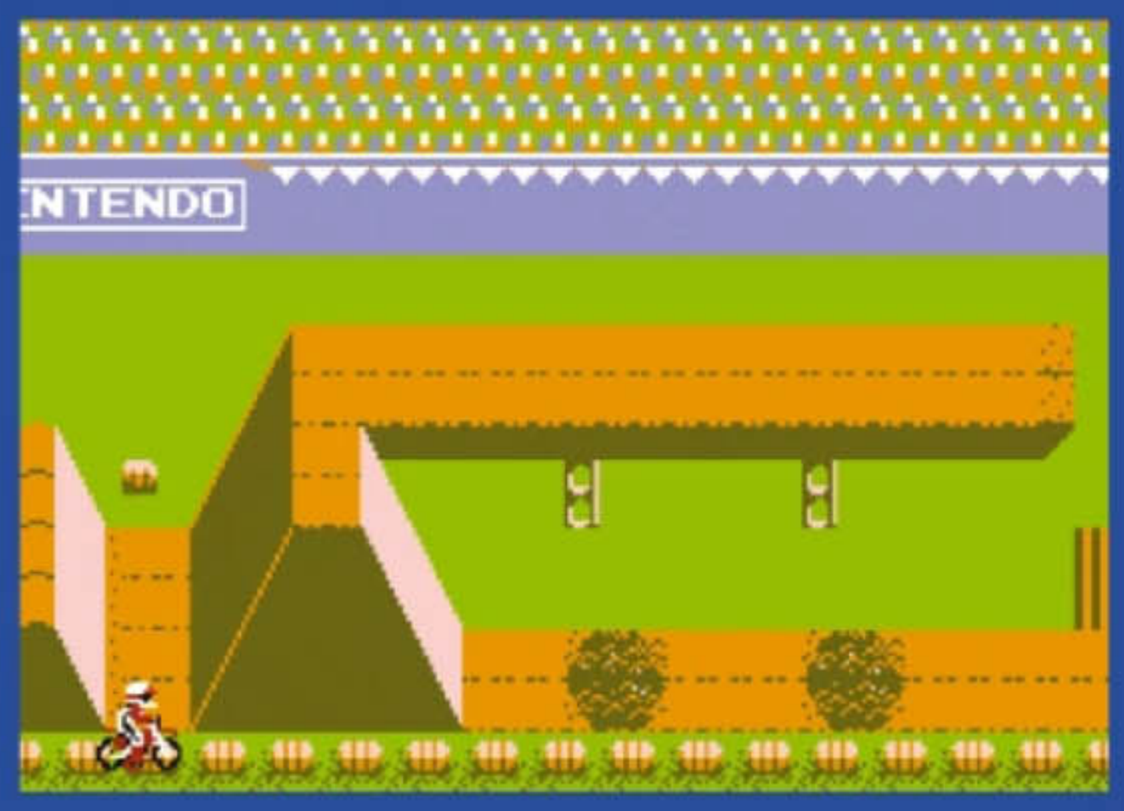
THREE WHEELS?!

Triple the options, triple the fun

NINTENDO, 1984







GAME A

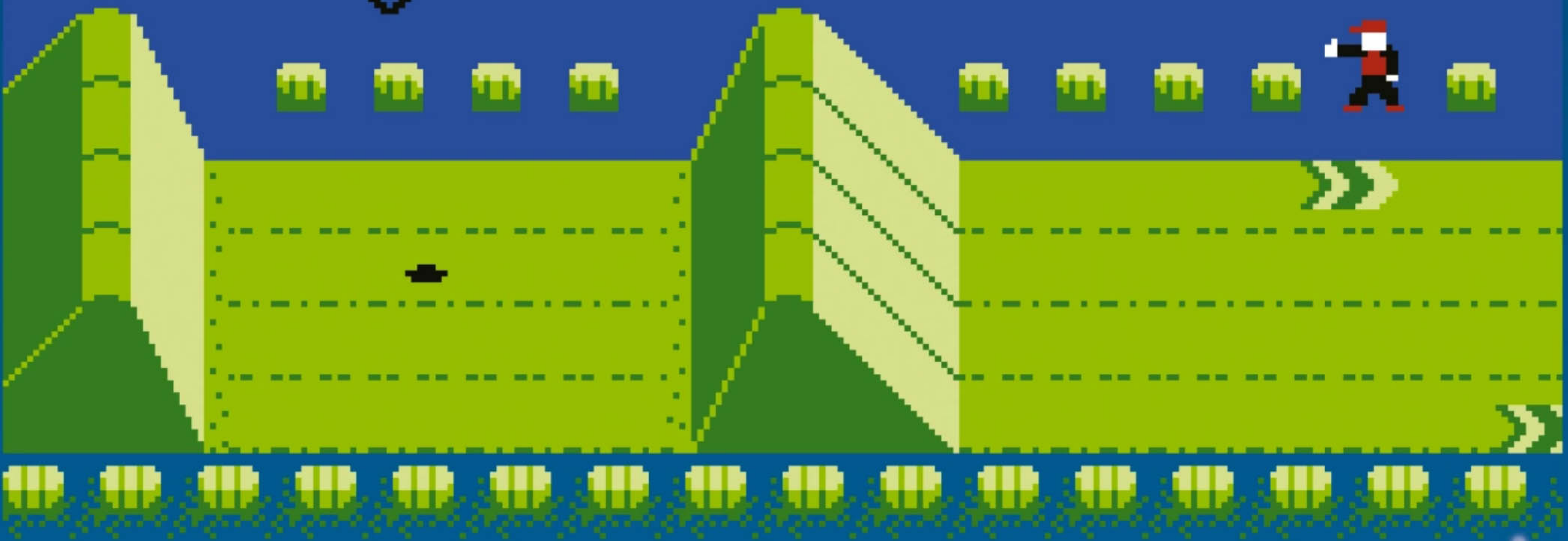
A pure time-attack mode where it's rider versus obstacles against the clock – beat the best time to proceed to the next stage. Angling your bike is key to success, as poorly-executed jumps can slow you down to a crawl or even result in costly crashes.

GAME B

Rival racers join the fray here, making switching lanes at the right time a crucial skill to master, choose your time wrong and it's boom town for you. There's more room for mistakes here, thanks to the fact that AI riders can crash out at any time, but it's a fun option if you need visible competition to wow the other people in the room.

DESIGN MODE

Create your own perfect motocross course out of the various jumps and hazards available, then see how you fare in the other two game modes. Sadly, course saving wasn't possible in previous non-computer disk versions – will that be fixed for the NES Mini version? We'll find out soon enough in November…

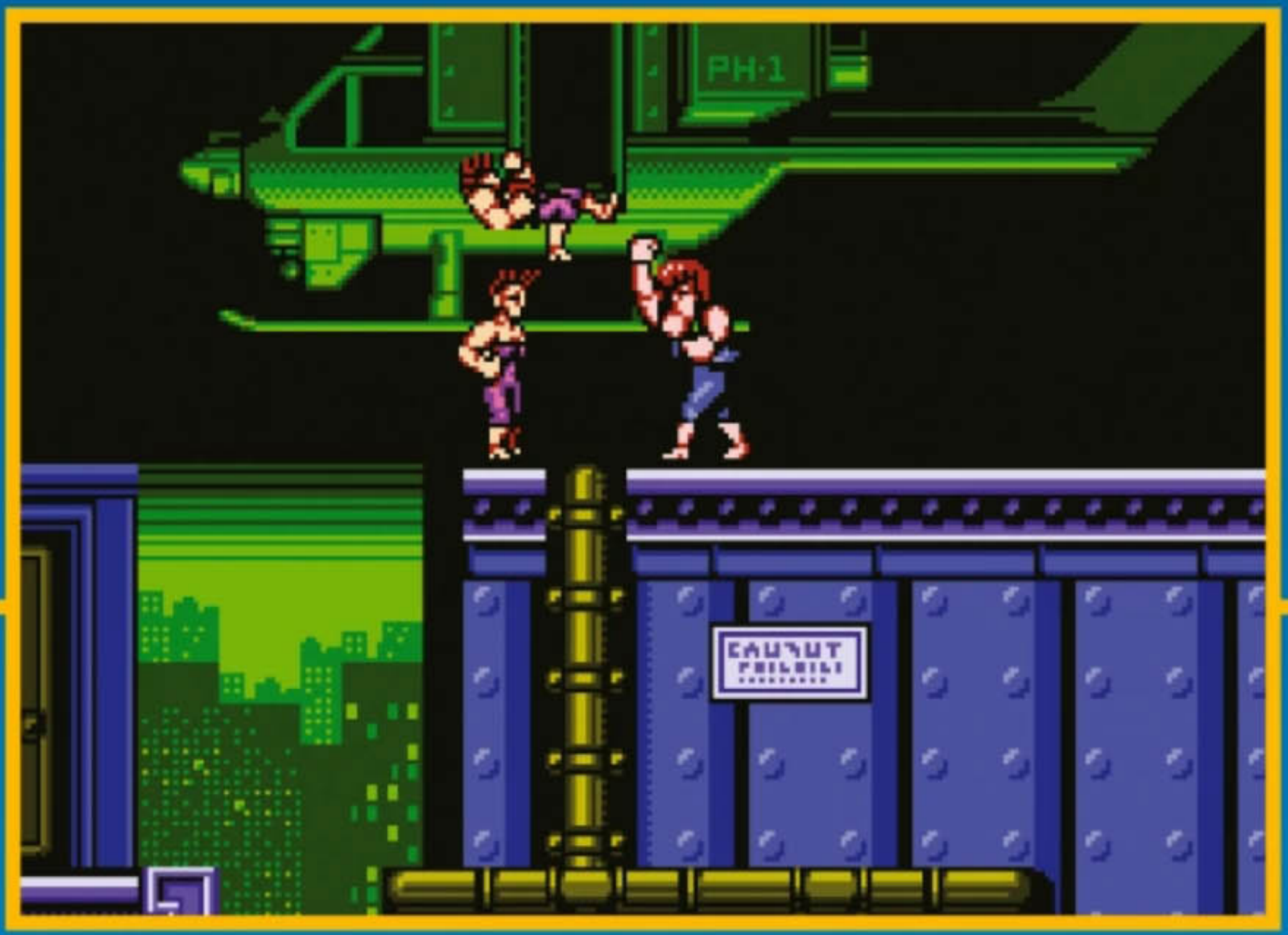


DOUBLE DRAGON II: THE REVENGE

WHEN BILLY MET JIMMY (AGAIN)

TECHNOS, 1989

While reviewers of the various versions of *Double Dragon* at the time were quick to latch onto the fact that this loose approximation of the arcade hit had the clout of a popular brand behind it, few would have dared point out that it isn't actually very good. With the power of hindsight, however, we're free to do just that – *Final Fight* and *Streets Of Rage* would follow soon after, making huge strides for the genre. *Double Dragon II*'s controls are based around *Renegade*'s, meaning A attacks your right side and B attacks left – weirdly, jumping was mapped to pressing both buttons. Cheap deaths and a underutilised combat system are other notable sources of frustration. Thumb and mental gymnastics aside, though, *Double Dragon II: The Revenge* is impressive given the constraints of the NES system, and it finally introduced a two-player mode, just don't expect a scrolling fighter that can go toe-to-toe with any of the big boys of the genre.



PUNCH-OUT!!

MEET THE CONTENDERS

Punch-Out!! is back, but it's missing a cover star

NINTENDO, 1987

The version of *Punch-Out!!* you'll play on the Nintendo Classic Mini: NES will be the one featuring 'Mr Dream' rather than 'Iron' Mike Tyson – but, realistically, his absence shouldn't matter too much. The appeal of the game was always based on its excellent gameplay and a great cast of original characters. Here's a refresher on your opponents…

GLASS JOE

- This guy is a wimp with a 1-99 record. His signature move is the 'Taunt Punch', which says everything you need to know.

VON KAISER

- A former boxing instructor for the military, this German fighter is past his prime. When he shakes his head, he's about to strike.

PISTON HONDA

- Japan's Minor Circuit champion hits hard, but has a soft defence. Watch out for his patented 'Piston Rush' combo.

DON FLAMENCO

- The Spanish dancer is a bit of a one-trick pony – he'll bait you into attacking and respond with a devastating uppercut.

KING HIPPO

- Gargantuan doesn't begin to describe this tribal leader. Attack when his mouth is open, and take advantage of his loose shorts.

GREAT TIGER

- India's premier boxer is aided by his magic powers of teleportation. Watch for the ruby in his turban – if it glows, he'll strike.

BALD BULL

- The Istanbul native is capable of sending Little Mac to the canvas with a single 'Bull Rush'. Uppercuts are effective against him.

SODA POPINSKI

- Kicking the booze has ticked off the former Vodka Drunkenski, as he's a formidable World Circuit opponent.

MR SANDMAN

- With strong rolling jabs and the 'Dreamland Express', this competitor is easily capable of putting you to sleep.

SUPER MACHO MAN

- The Hollywood bodybuilder fights like an even more ferocious Soda Popinski, which is bad news for Little Mac.

MR DREAM

- He's your waking nightmare – a terrifying pugilist who can floor you instantly during the first 90 seconds of a fight.

STARTROPICS

10 ESSENTIAL STARTROPICS FACTS

Discover what sets this cult classic apart from the crowd

NINTENDO, 1990

***StarTropics* is one of the lesser-known games on the Nintendo Classic Mini as both games in this action-adventure series were released for the NES exclusively.** However, *StarTropics* has a cult following and if you missed the game, its inclusion here is a second chance to discover what made it so good. Here's what you need to know…

1. **Your protagonist Mike isn't a 'Chosen One' and he doesn't have special powers – he's an ordinary kid from Seattle.**

2. The goal of the game is to find out how and why Mike's uncle, Dr Steven Jones, has been abducted.

3. **Mike's primary weapon is a yo-yo, which he throws with incredible force because he's an ace baseball pitcher.**

4. Additional items are themed around baseball too – you can pick up bats, balls and even spiked shoes.

5. **The setting for the game is a chain of sunny tropical islands, rather than a typical European-style feudal kingdom.**

6. The original release came packaged with a letter that set up the game's story, which had to be dipped into water to reveal a vital code.

7. **You get not only a health bar, but a few lives with which to clear each of the game's dungeon areas.**

8. While overworlds have typical tiny RPG sprites, *StarTropics*' action scenes are graphically rather gorgeous.

9. **The game was directed by *Punch-Out!!* director Genyo Takeda, and has much of his trademark humour.**

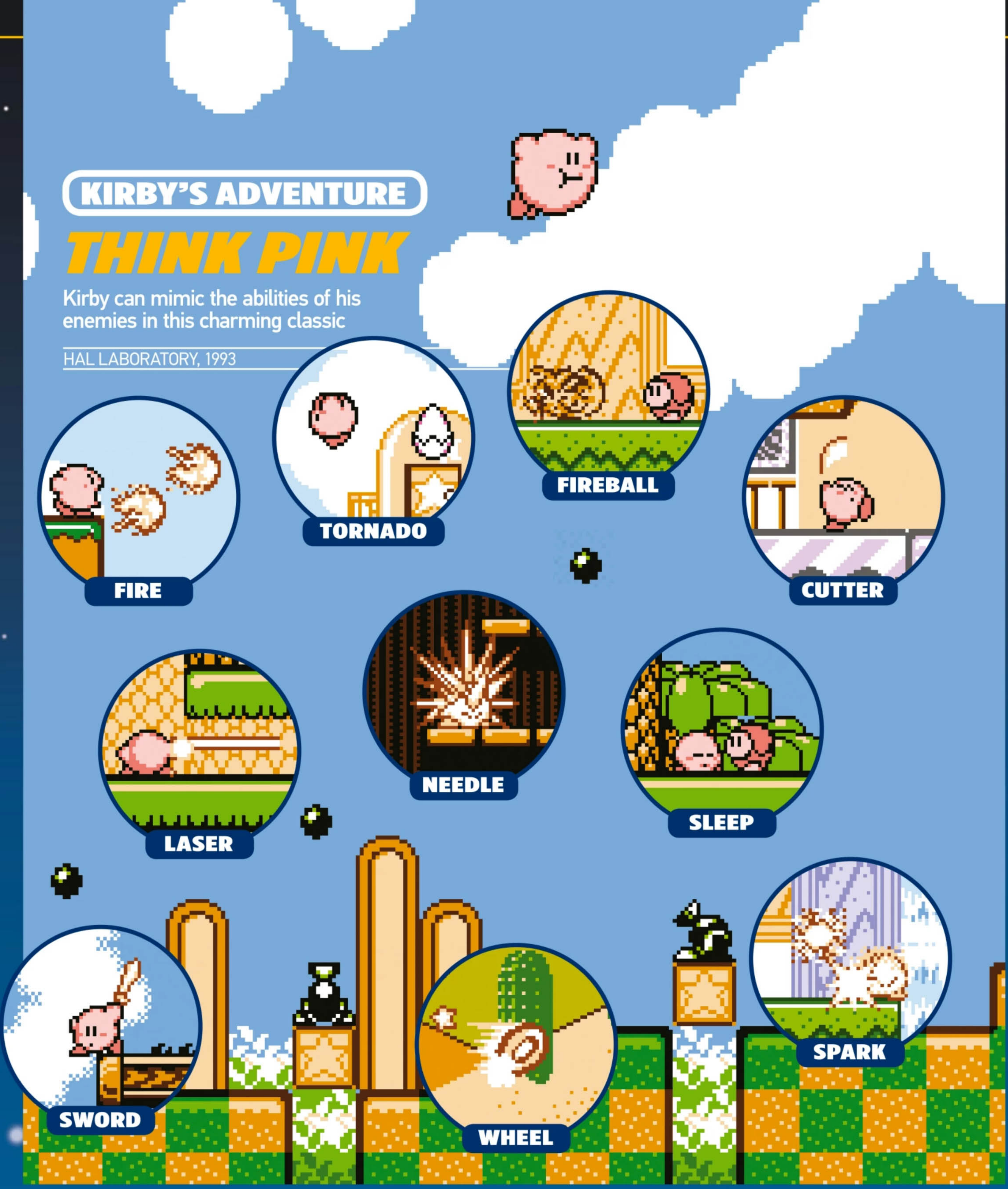
10. The music had some bugs in the original release, which fans have managed to fix – but they may persist on Classic Mini version.

KIRBY'S ADVENTURE

THINK PINK

Kirby can mimic the abilities of his enemies in this charming classic

HAL LABORATORY, 1993

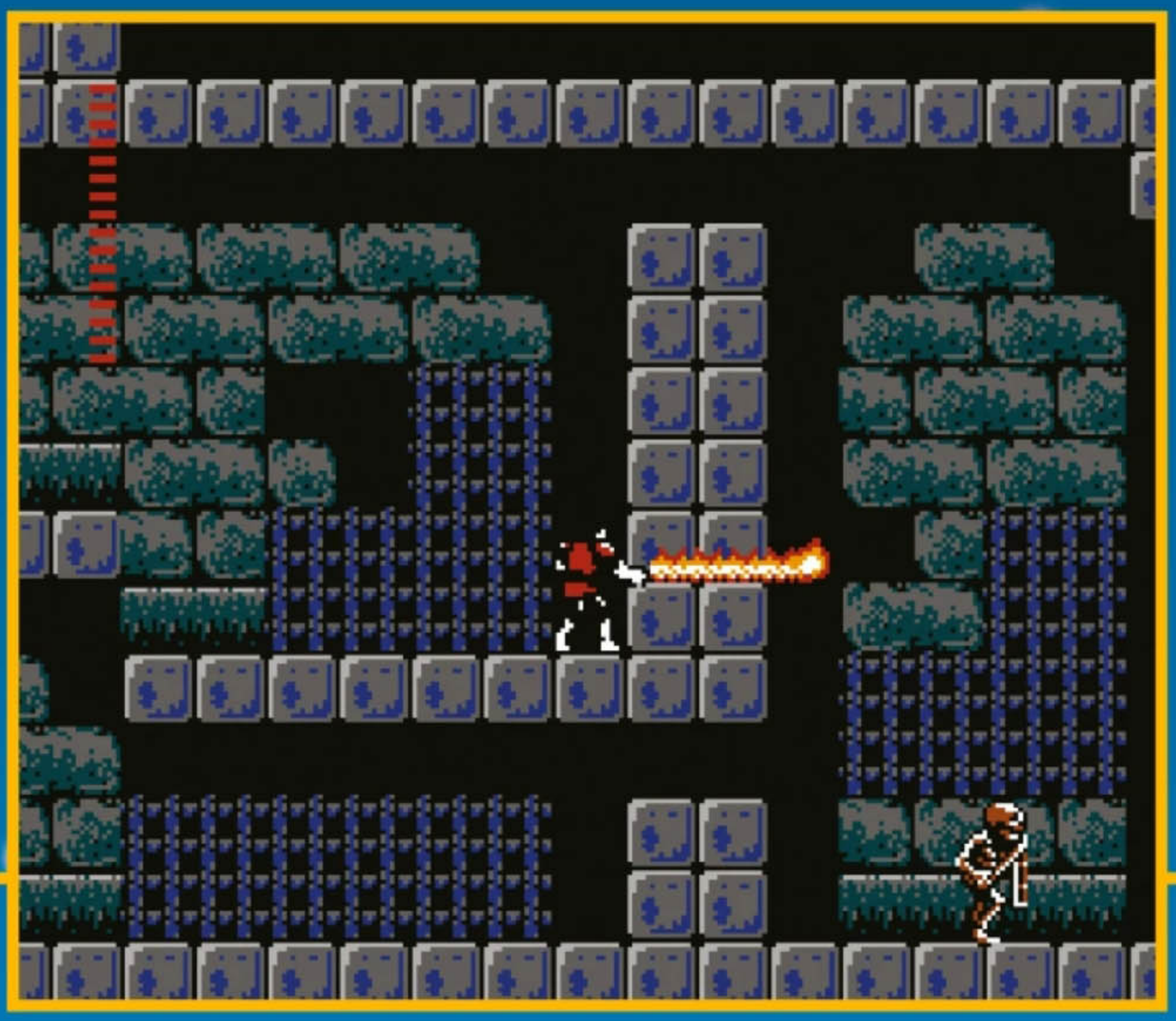


CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST

WHAT A HORRIBLE NIGHT…

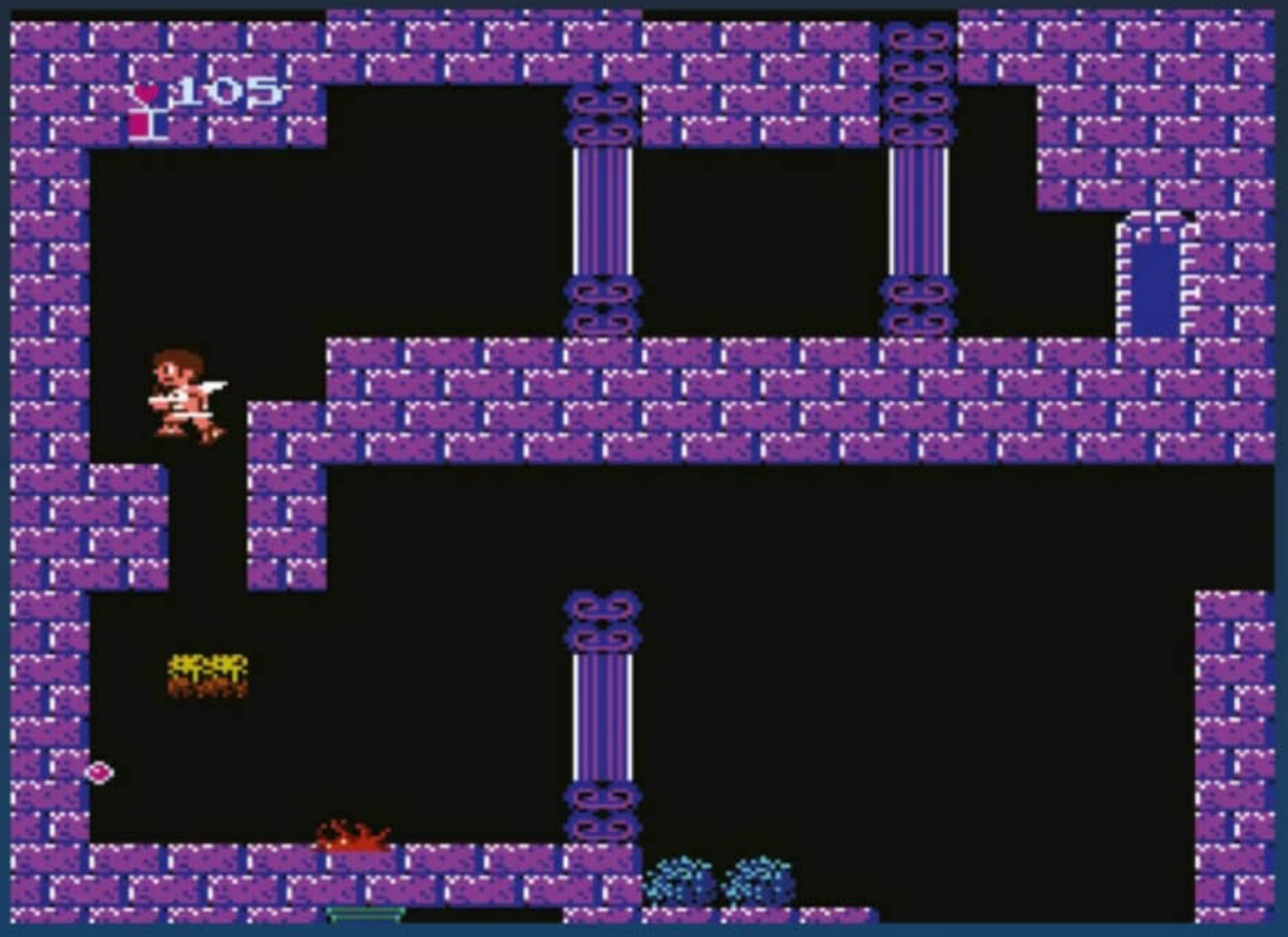
KONAMI, 1987

Dracula's second coming serves as a strange piece of foreshadowing, a game not especially well-received at the time but one instrumental in establishing non-linear game design as a viable option alongside games like *Metroid* – the modern moniker of 'Metroidvania' owes more to this game than to the original *Castlevania*, that's for sure. Progress can be tough and the poor translation means that clues on how to move forward are often lost, muddied or misleading, one section in particular being obscure to the point of ridicule. Combat is still pretty enjoyable, but don't expect to finish this without a guide.



KID ICARUS

MEET THE COMEBACK KID



NINTENDO, 1986

Ten years ago, a device like the Nintendo Classic Mini: NES could easily have made it to the shelves without *Kid Icarus* being included. Although the NES game is a cult hit, the series spent a good two decades in a dormant state after the release of the Game Boy sequel *Kid Icarus: Of Myths And Monsters*. However, in modern times Nintendo has made quite an effort to revive *Kid Icarus* and its hero, Pit, with inclusions in the high profile *Super Smash Bros.* series and a 3DS sequel.

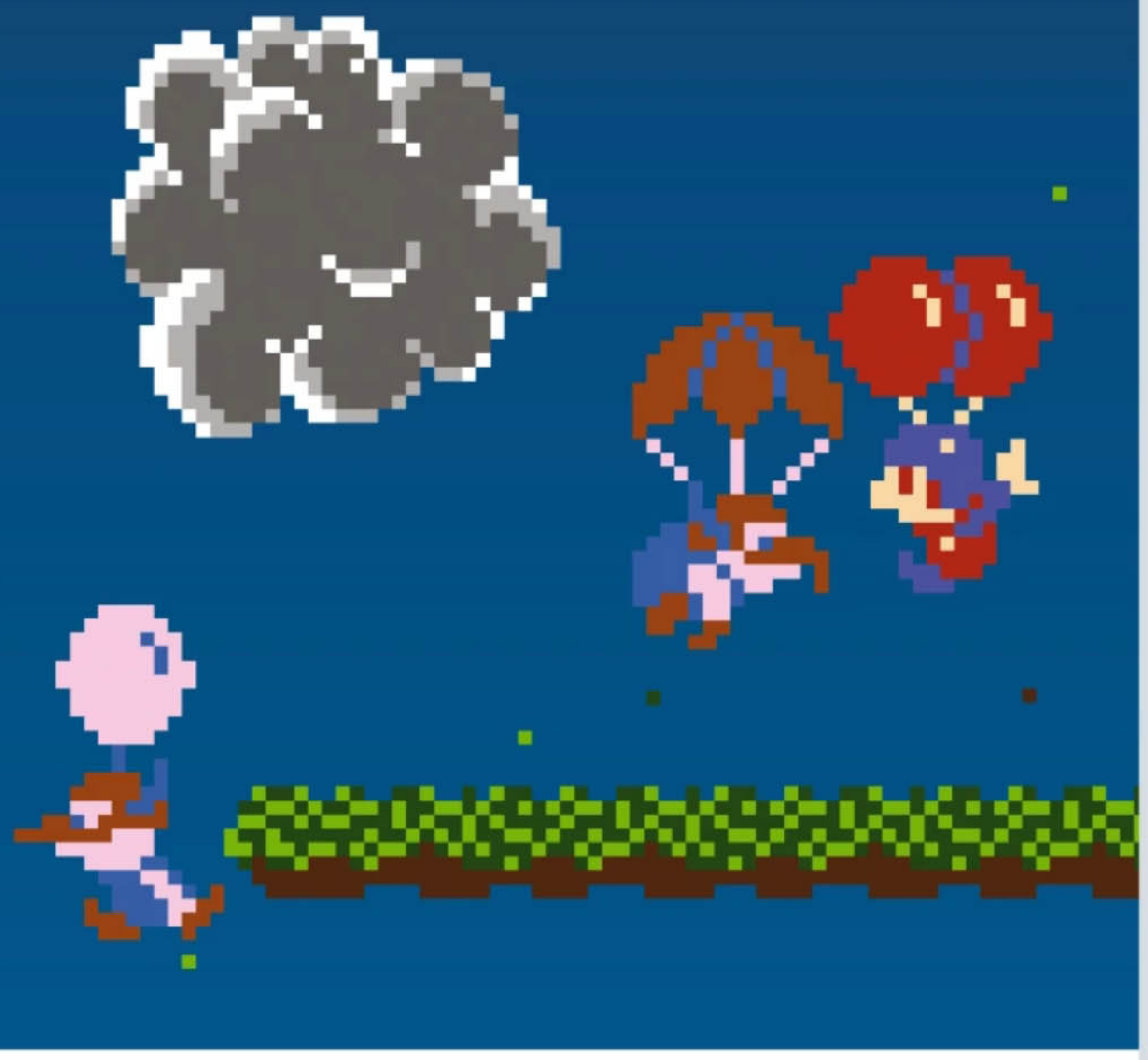
The game itself is a platformer with an unusual twist, as many of the game's levels don't scroll horizontally. Instead, they scroll vertically and wrap around horizontally, allowing Pit to exit the right side of the screen to reappear on the left. It also provides an early example of character development, with Pit gaining equipment and health – but only if he earns enough experience, in the form of points, to use them.

BALLOON FIGHT

ACCOUNTING FOR INFLATION

NINTENDO, 1985

While mechanically quite similar to *Joust*, *Balloon Fight* is an early glimpse into the colourful and family-friendly world of Nintendo games in general. Incorporating remaining 'lives' into the player character with unpopped balloons was a masterstroke of game design (and one that *Mario Kart*'s battle mode uses to this day), with the added pressure of negotiating a screen of enemies with only one inflatable miraculously holding you in the air a stressful, yet satisfying, experience. Balloon Trip mode is perhaps even more tense and rewarding than the main game, not to mention it being a precursor to the many endless runners that dominate the mobile market today.



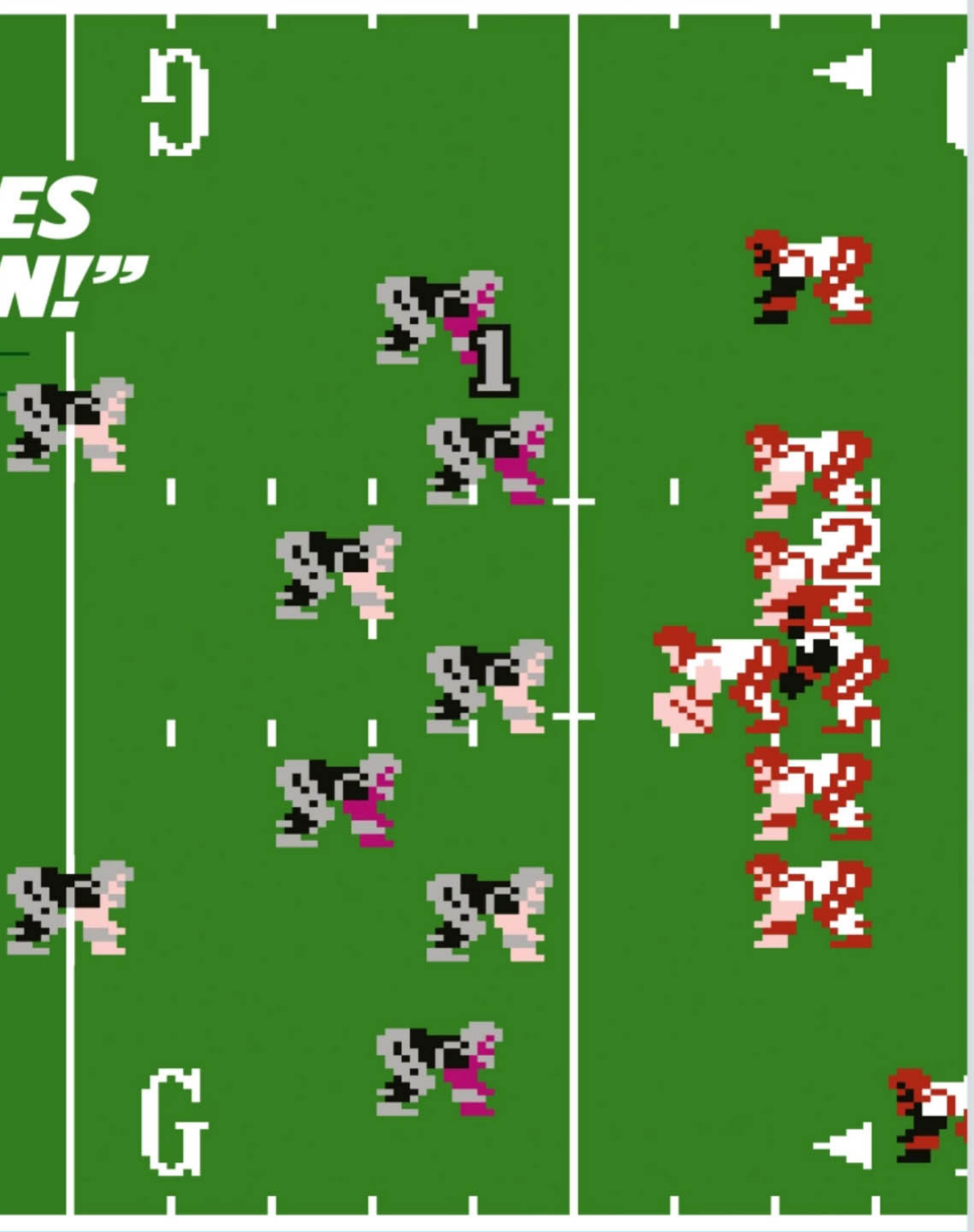
TECMO BOWL

"NOBODY CATCHES BO – TOUCHDOWN!"

TECMO, 1989

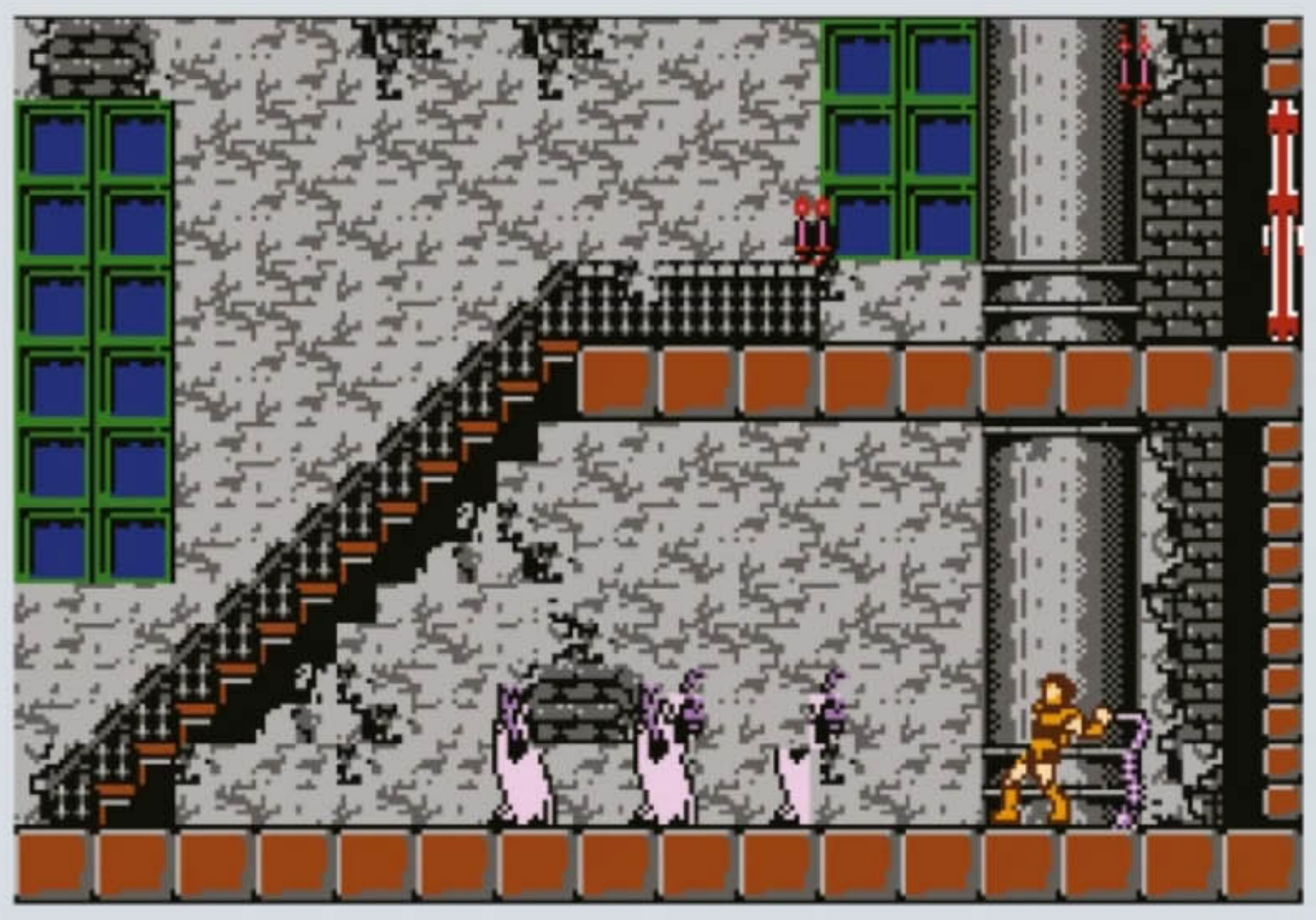
An old sports game might seem like an odd inclusion in a package like this, but this multiplayer classic still resonates with a big fanbase – so much so that modders still release annual roster updates for the game. Tecmo Bowl isn't a simulation in the same way that the likes of *John Madden Football* were – each team is limited to nine on-field players and a playbook containing just four plays. The simplified arcade gameplay is a big reason for the enduring appeal of the game, though, as it strips back what can be a pretty complex and daunting sport for the uninitiated.

If you want a quick advantage, we would recommend you start out with the LA Raiders. The team contains Bo Jackson, an extraordinary athlete who competed in both the NFL and Major League Baseball – his running speed is incredible and you'll evade defenders with ease.



THIRD-PARTY CLASSICS

Titles from other teams hold their own just as well as the ones from Nintendo



CASTLEVANIA

KONAMI, 1986

■ The saga of Belmont versus Dracula started right here, with this side-scrolling gothic adventure that features near-constant nods to classic horror literature. As tough as it is, the NES original is still great fun. Take things slow, don't get cocky and you might – *might* – just survive the ordeal.

FINAL FANTASY

SQUARE, 1987

■ Whether or not you believe the story that it was so named as it was apparently Square's last-ditch effort to hit the big time, the original *Final Fantasy* is worth experiencing if only to see how the series grew and evolved. Early games were slow-paced and grind-heavy, which won't prove to everyone's tastes.

GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

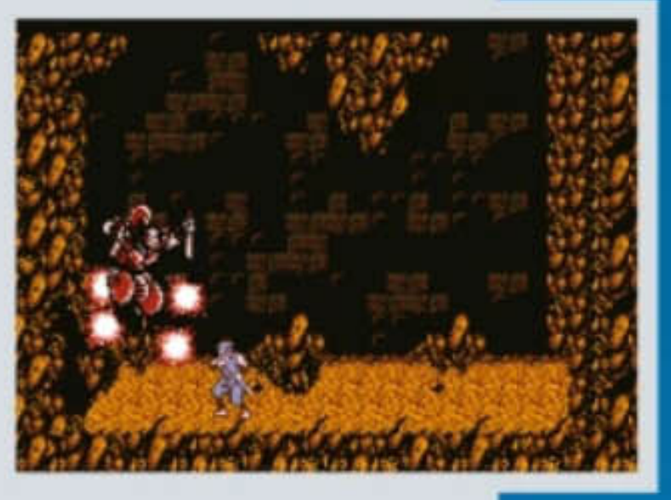
CAPCOM, 1986

■ Capcom's tough action coin-op found a home for itself on the NES, alongside equally brutal games such as *Contra* and *Battletoads*. Even when you think you've mastered it, *Ghosts 'N Goblins* has one last trick up its sleeve, sending you back to the start to run the entire gauntlet again in search of the true ending.

MEGA MAN 2

CAPCOM, 1988

■ In an era where misleading boxart could end in severe disappointment, finding a game like *Mega Man 2* – where the colourful sprite work was actually way better than the frankly embarrassing cover art – was a rare treat. Again, it's not exactly an easy game, but you'll find a rhythm once you know what order is best to tackle the bosses in.



NINJA GAIDEN

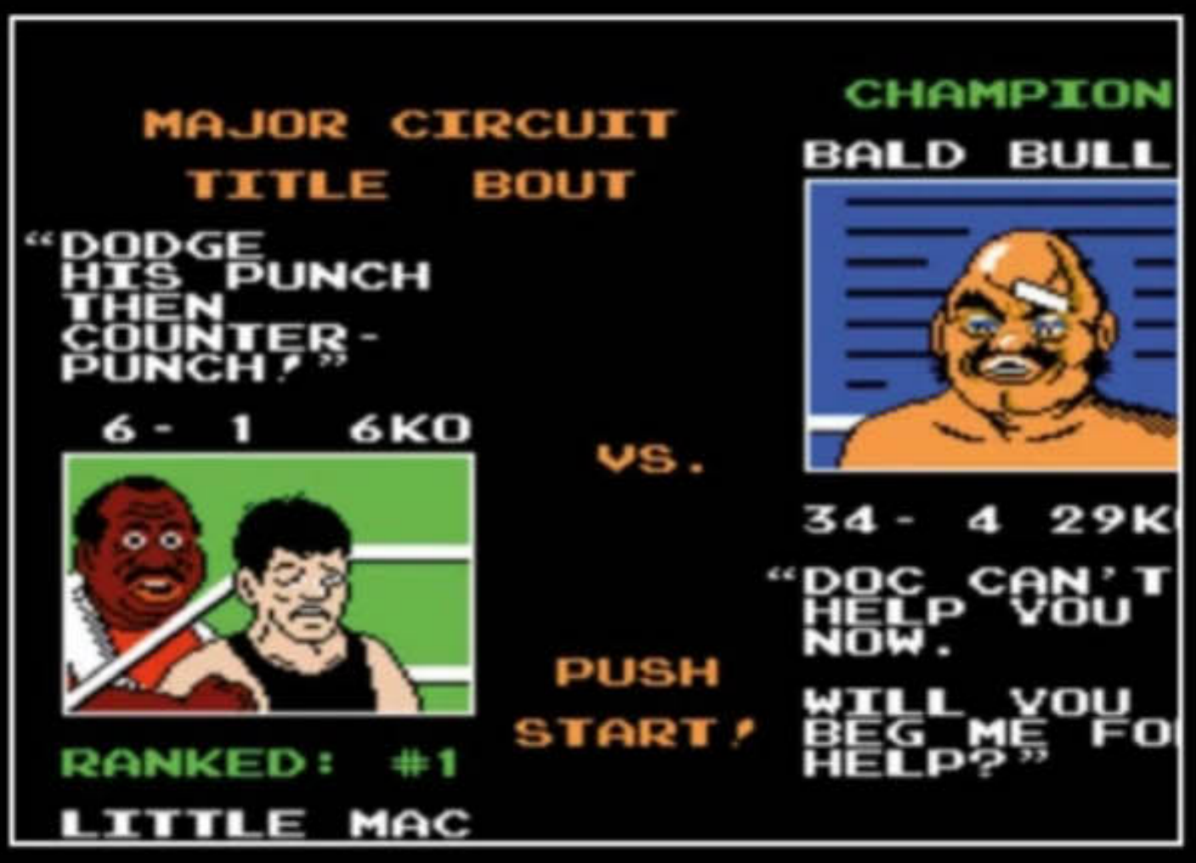
TECMO, 1988

■ Ninjas always come across as so cool and powerful, so to see a game debunk this myth so ruthlessly was actually quite amusing. While Ryu can kill most enemies with a single slash or special attack, bats and birds turn out to be the ultimate anti-ninja weapon, forcing our hero down pits for frustrating death after frustrating death.

THE CLASSIC GAME

PUNCH-OUT!!

There is nothing more heartening then seeing an unlikely hero triumph over arduous odds – a notion never so passionately demonstrated than by a brave, pint-sized boxer who went under the unfortunate moniker Little Mac


MAJOR CIRCUIT TITLE BOUT

"DODGE HIS PUNCH THEN COUNTER-PUNCH!"

6 - 1 6KO

VS.

RANKED: #1

LITTLE MAC

PUSH START!

CHAMPION

BALD BULL

34 - 4 29K

"DOC CAN'T HELP YOU NOW.

WILL YOU BEG ME FO HELP?"

» Yeah, nice advice, Doc. Now hows about calling me a real doctor?

IN THE KNOW

PUNCH-OUT!!

NEW

CONTINUE

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** SPORT (BOXING)
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3+

The 2006 film *Rocky Balboa* saw the iconic boxer step back in the ring, in a fight that pitted the fibrous veteran against a younger, technically superior opponent. Chicken chasing, meat pounding and inspiring fanfare aside, the film poses the question: if you took two heavyweight fighters, from two different eras, who would prove victorious? So what would happen if you pitted the former Eighties videogame champ *Punch-Out!!* against a new breed of boxing brawlers? Cue montage.

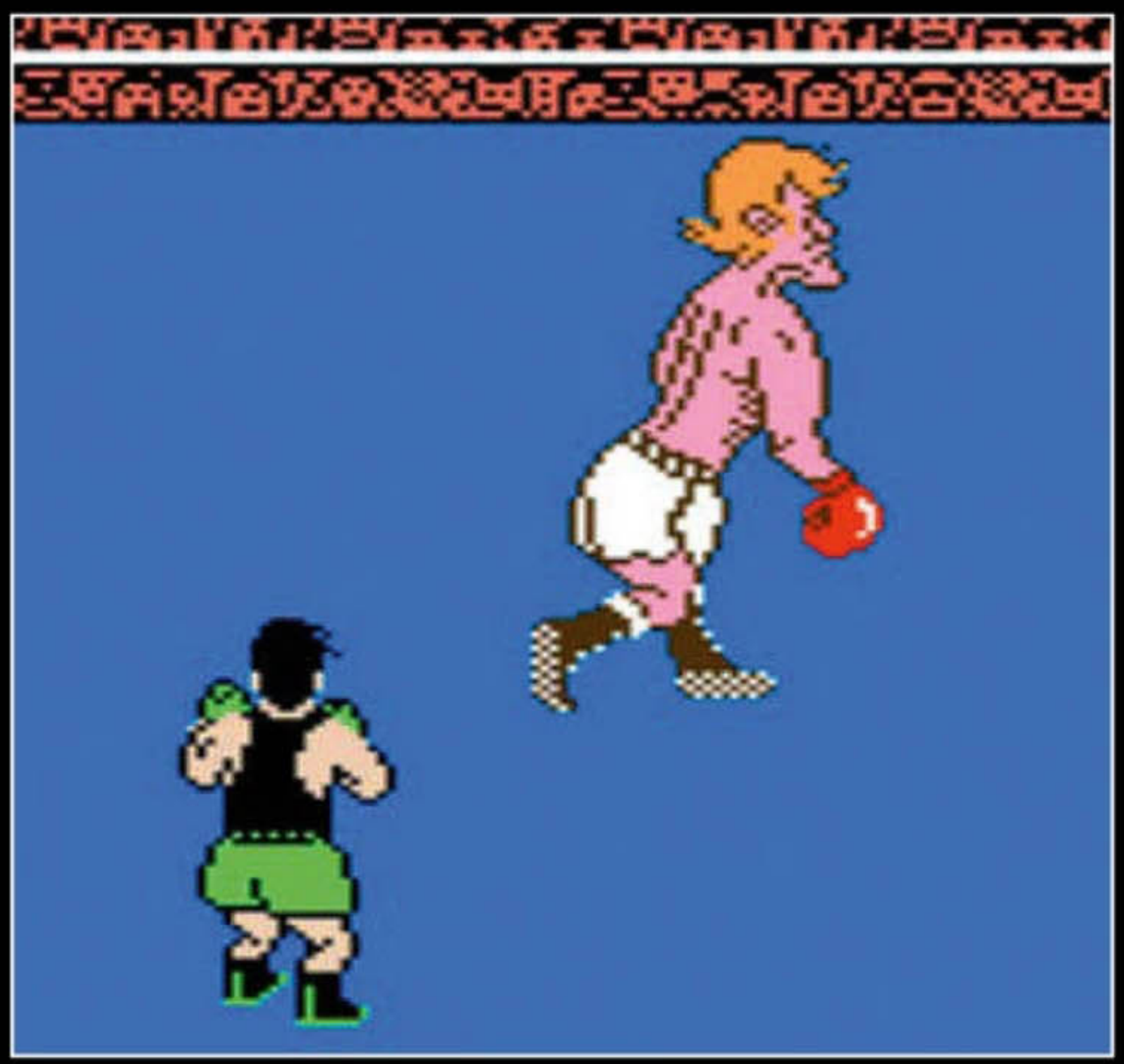
Back in 1984, Nintendo released an innovative arcade boxing game called *Punch-Out!!*. Its cartoon tale about a transparent pugilist working his way up through a rank of oddball fighters quickly attracted droves of sleeve-scrunching loafer-wearers into neon-lit arcades everywhere. It was conceivable, then, that Nintendo's grey toaster would host its own version of the game and in 1987 a NES sequel was released.

The home version sported a number of startling differences from its cabinet prequel. The arcade's modest roster of six fighters had been increased to 11, spanning 14 bouts over three circuits and most noticeably, the transparent wireframe fighter had been replaced with a pathetic 17-year-old kid, who looked in dire need of some sunlight.

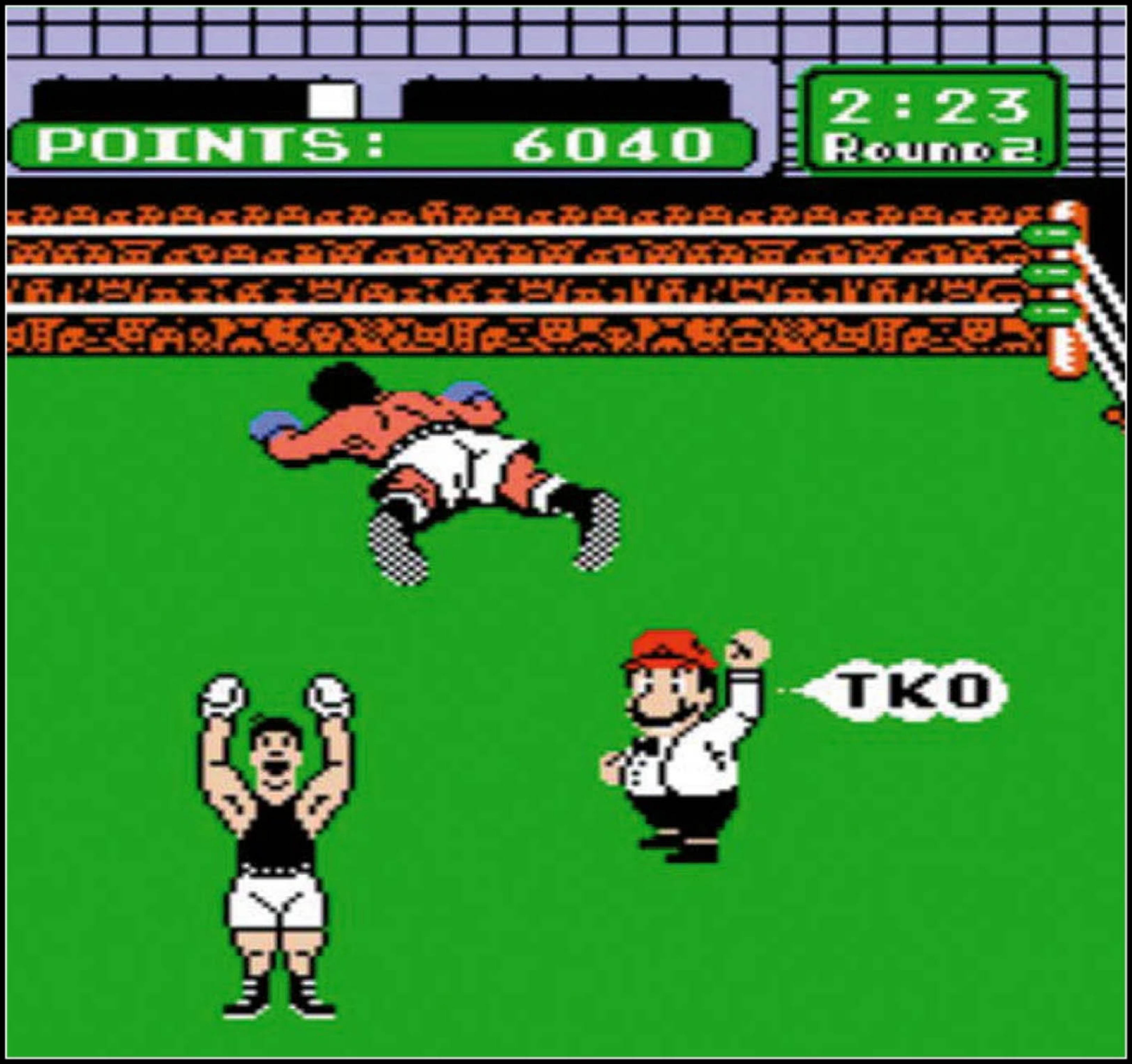
There's a distinct Stallone-esque scene in the game, which shows the eager fighter running beside his puffy-cheeked trainer, Doc Louis. The trainer is perched on a bike, trying to coax his pink-suited calcium kid into full fitness. It's a subtle sequence which personifies *Punch-Out!!*: a humorous pastiche of an underdog story, with a nod to Eighties pop culture.

The first opponent you face is the gangly orange-haired Frenchman, Glass Joe. He awkwardly bounds and squawks around the mat like a startled llama, looking uncomfortable in his surroundings and rather unsure of his undersized opponent. Beside him stands a familiar face, dressed in unfamiliar attire. Playing a cameo referee is an older, portlier looking Mario. He is donning a bow tie and winkle-pickers, and beneath his nose sits his trademark moustache, and on his brow winks that very famous red flat-cap.

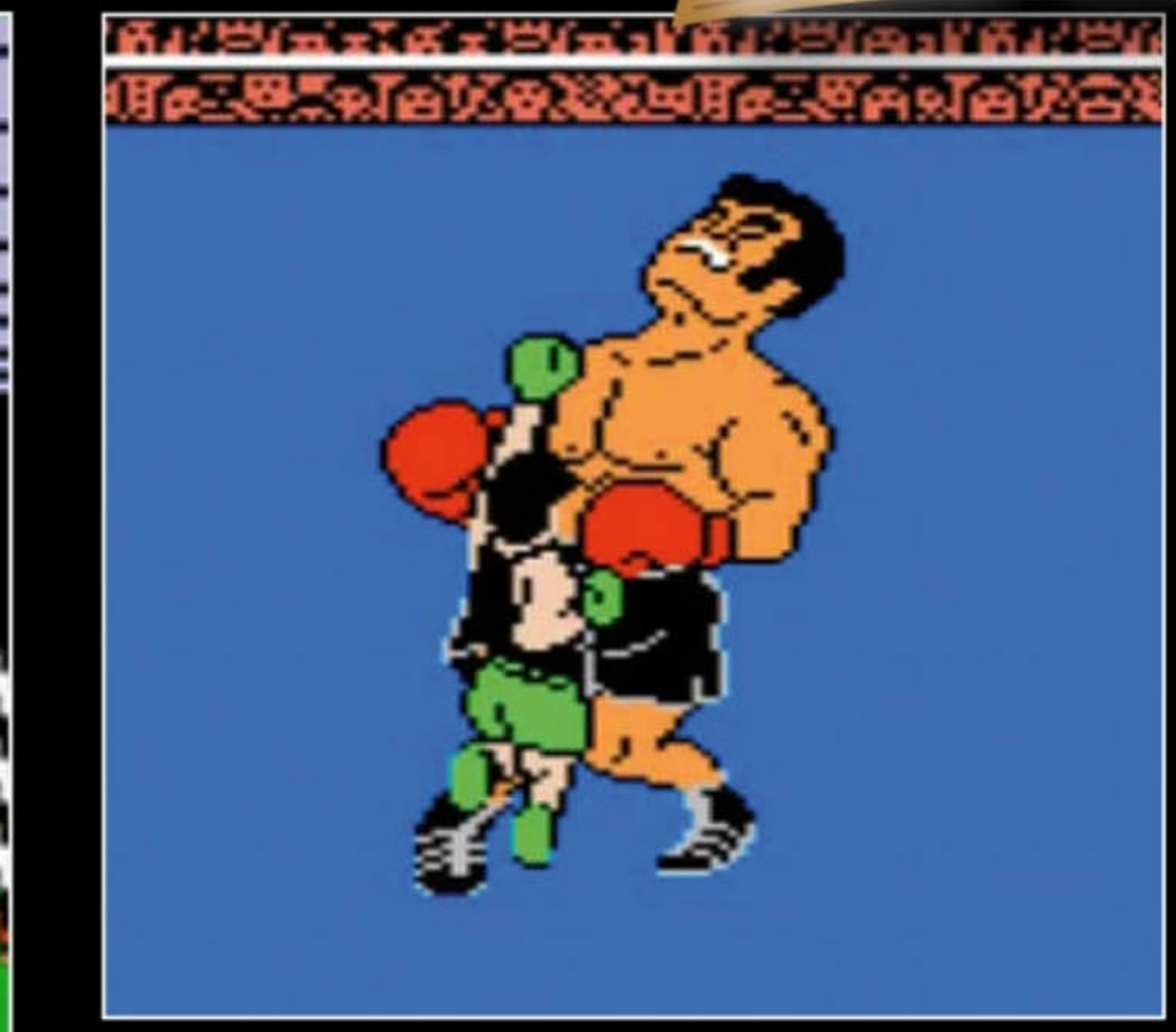
Mario calls the fight and you begin. The first thing that you will notice is the lack of freedom and attacks at Mac's disposal. Five punches: two low body blows, two uppercuts, and one special spinning



» Glass Joe looks weary on his feet after a devastating blow from the little man.



» Another easy win for the thunderous Little Mac. Does he load cement into those gloves?



» A cutting left jab by Mac sends Tom Jones' mouth guard into his tonsils.

» Mac's mum accidentally put a red sock in the washing machine again.

haymaker. But with only a sparse number of buttons with which to call commands, what do you expect? Thankfully, the small arsenal of moves you do have work a charm and it's these damage-dealing deficiencies that help make the fights immediately engulfing. Crucially, the punches feel solid and proficient in rattling loose teeth – a vital sensation for any boxing game that's worth its weight in blood, sweat and tears. Certain aspects of the sport are lacking in the game; you can't bounce around the ring, taunt an opponent, or trap a fighter against the ropes. The boxing presented here is stripped of its gloves, and fought with basic bare knuckles.

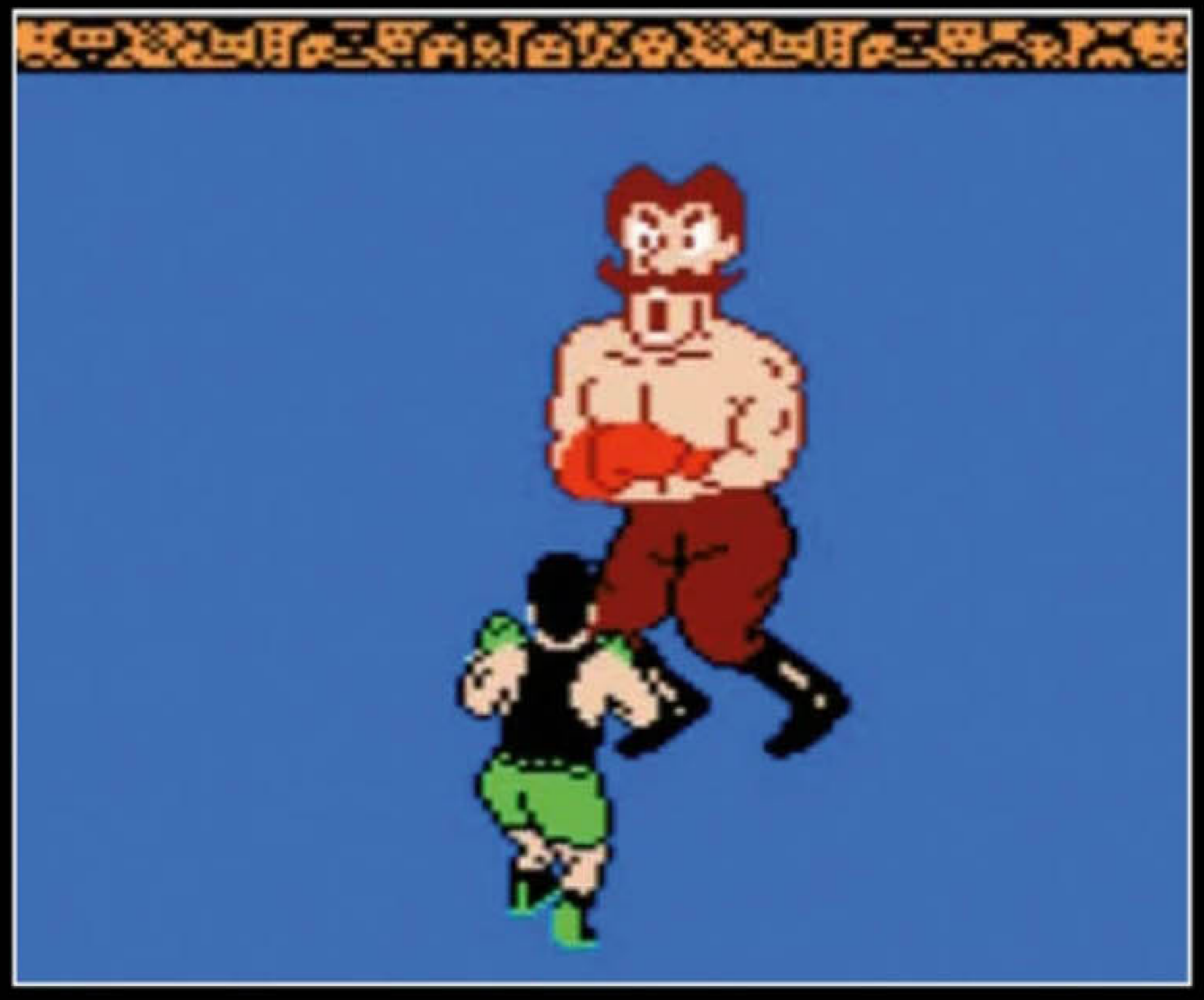
All of the opponents that Little Mac must face look suspiciously out of his weight class, so he must muster brains as well as brawn, and tempt each fighter to expose their weak spot to take control of the fight. Each opponent follows a strict routine of jabs which eventually open up their defence, and with it your chance of victory. Ironically, progressing far in *Punch-Out!!* doesn't rest on how many punches you throw, but rather the timing in which you throw them. Anticipating your opponent's punch pattern and pre-empting a nasty head pounding is what gets you a shot at the heavyweight title, a notion emphasised during the intermitting round breaks. Rather then copper pennies or cotton wool buds being pressed against Mac's cuts and swells, Doc's modest remedy is a subtle pat on the back, coupled with stern advice on how best to topple the stronger opponent. Your part in this role was to increase the tempo of Doc's patting by tapping select, unravel his cryptic riddles, and utilise them in the ring.

The fights are split into three rounds lasting three minutes each and many of the matches will be won by technical knockout. One thing you should keep a keen eye on during each round is the state of Mac's stamina – displayed by the heart meter – which will diminish from absorbing heavy blows and throwing messy, missed swings.

Punch-Out!! always had personality standing proudly in its corner. Every combatant seemed strikingly iconic, and cleverly their idiosyncrasies seemed to play both to their strengths and their weaknesses. Case in point, one of the later opponents, King Hippo, is grossly oversized, and a heavy blow from his flabby fist will send Mac's health plummeting rapidly. However, find his weighty weak spot – a plaster-covered bellybutton, and one knock down is all it takes to end the fight, as the majestic gastropod proves too heavy to get back up onto his feet.

There is no question whatsoever that boxing games have evolved dramatically since the release of Nintendo's punchy 8-bit brawler. Gone are the button-bashing jabs, the hazardous haymakers and the thumb-splitting action of trying to frantically raise a floored fighter to his feet. A new breed of fighter exhibits a foreign formula and battles with a deadly stance broken with analogue commands, offering a greater level of control. In true *Rocky* style, this bloody clash has gone to the score cards: there is just no separating these two gallant fighters. Both demonstrate the finest virtues of the sport. There goes the final bell… ending a fight that was just too close to call.

ANTICIPATING YOUR OPPONENT'S PUNCH PATTERN AND PRE-EMPTING A NASTY HEAD POUNDING IS WHAT GETS YOU A SHOT AT THE HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE



» It looks as though Russia's Von Kaiser catches a nasty low blow to his Kalashnikov!

MIKE TYSON'S BLOW OUT

Nintendo actually released two versions of *Punch-Out!!* on the NES, distinguishable by their final bosses. The game was initially released in 1987 as *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!* and had Little Mac face the lobe-loving rebel in a dream match-up for his heavyweight title. However, in 1990 another version of the brawler was released, omitting Tyson from the game and replacing him with the soppy sounding, Mr Dream. Although the new champion looked poles apart from Iron Mike, he inherited all of his trademark moves. The theories surrounding the reasons for the switch included the boxer's media-masticated image and his high-profile run-in with the law. The genuine reason was less exciting however, involving a contract dispute and loss of title. The game franchise has since seen two sequels, *Super Punch-Out!!* on the Super Nintendo, which, oddly, dropped the character of Little Mac, and the simply named *Punch-Out!!*, which brought the series to the Wii in 2009.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
SYSTEMS: SNES, GBA, VIRTUAL CONSOLE
YEAR: 1991

SUPER MARIO BROS
SYSTEMS: NES
YEAR: 1985

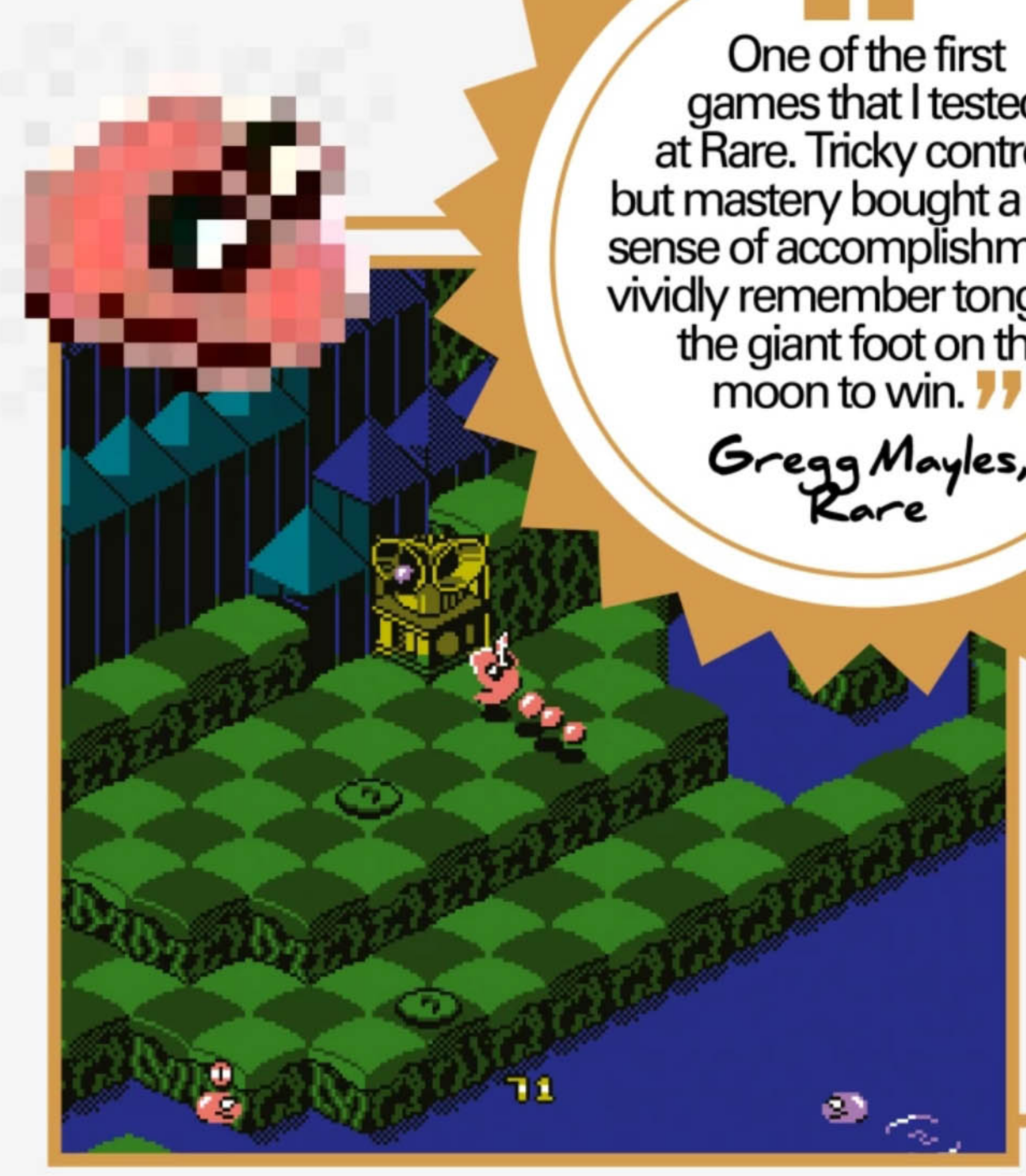
DONKEY KONG
SYSTEMS: NES
YEAR: 1983

retro GAMER READERS' CHOICE

THE GREATEST NES GAMES

Nintendo's 8-bit machine established the company as the dominant force in the international console market, and it couldn't have done so without classic software. Nick Thorpe counts down its top 25 games, as voted for by Retro Gamer readers…

Nintendo®
SELECT
START



“One of the first games that I tested at Rare. Tricky controls but mastery bought a huge sense of accomplishment. I vividly remember tonguing the giant foot on the moon to win.”

Gregg Mayles, Rare

SNAKE RATTLE ‘N’ ROLL

■ **DEVELOPER:** Rare ■ **YEAR:** 1990 ■ **GENRE:** Platform

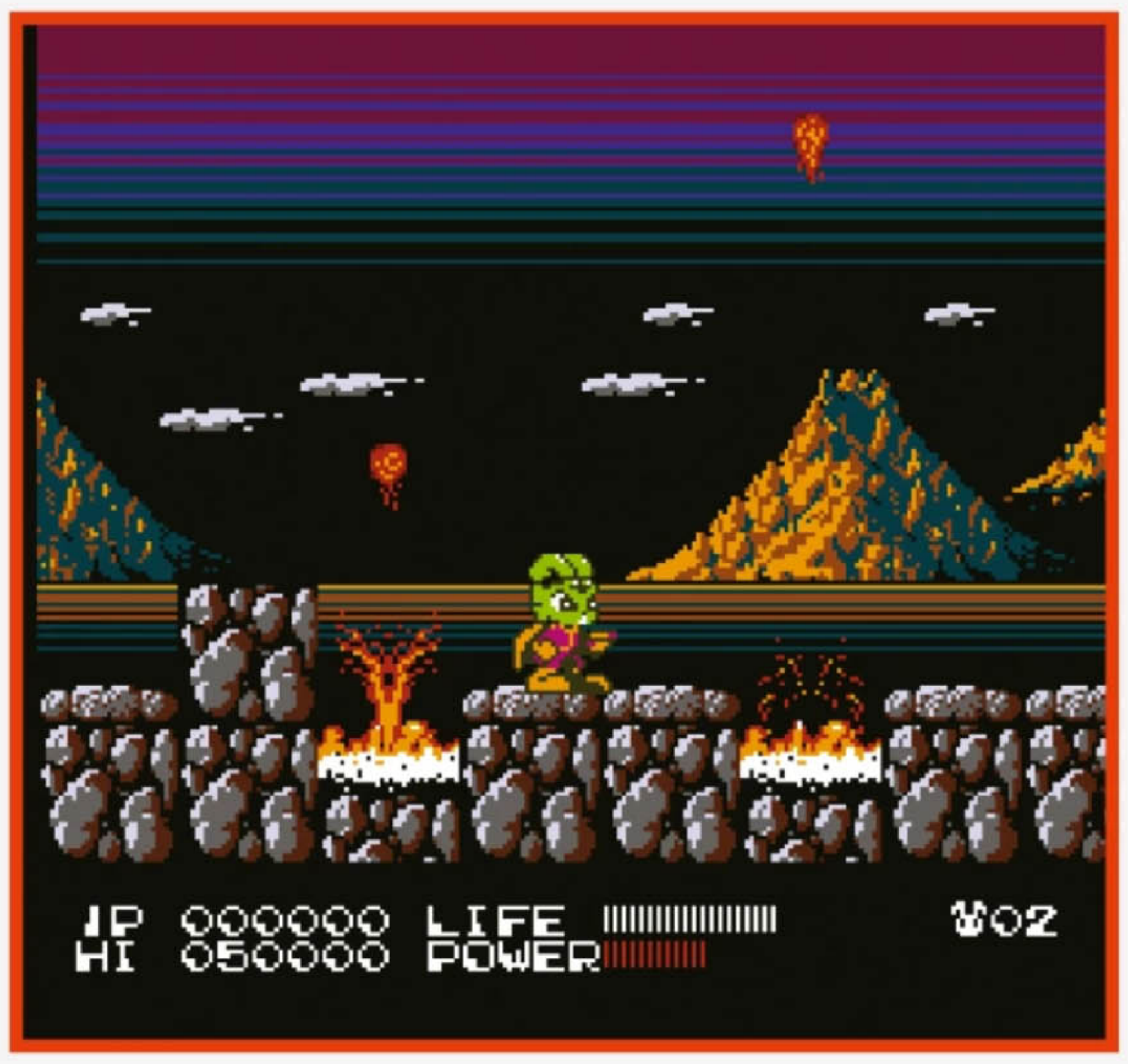
25 **Born from an** experimental drive to create a small NES cartridge, *Snake Rattle ‘N’ Roll* sees players chasing down and eating Nibbley Pibbleys in order to grow their snake, in order to tip the level’s scales and open the door to the next stage. Rare’s isometric action game is a tricky one to categorise – but that’s not a bad thing, as it’s a unique experience. Be sure to try the simultaneous two-player mode, too!

BUCKY O’HARE

■ **DEVELOPER:** Konami

■ **YEAR:** 1992 ■ **GENRE:** Platform

24 **The spotlight might** not have shone on *Bucky O’Hare* for long, but Konami ensured that he got a very good licensed platform game while it did. It’s similar to *Mega Man* in structure, with Bucky seeking to rescue his crew members from the Toad Empire across a variety of planets, which can be tackled in any order. Arriving late in the life of the NES, *Bucky O’Hare* provided some of the most attractive visuals on the system alongside some pretty strong gameplay.

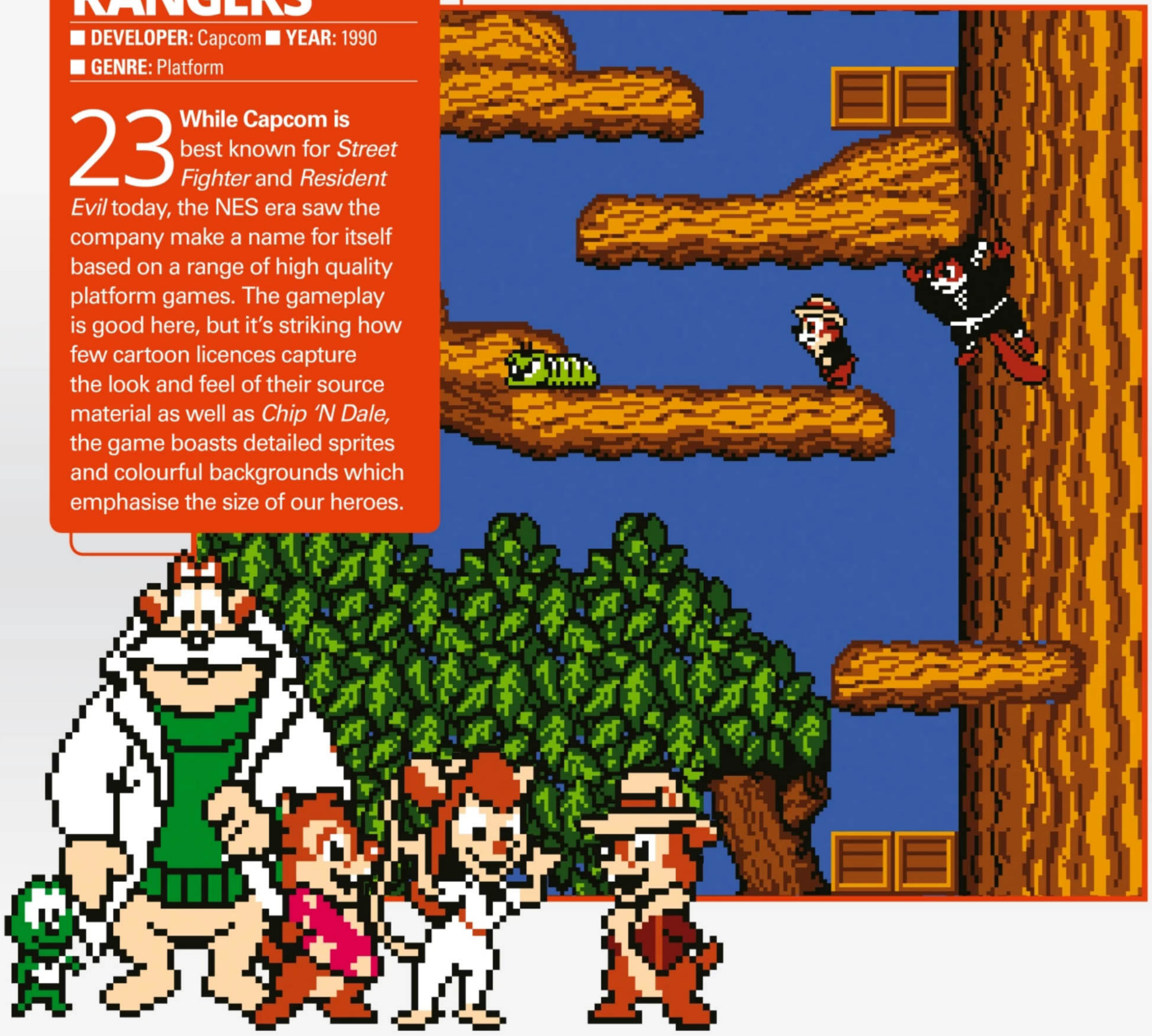


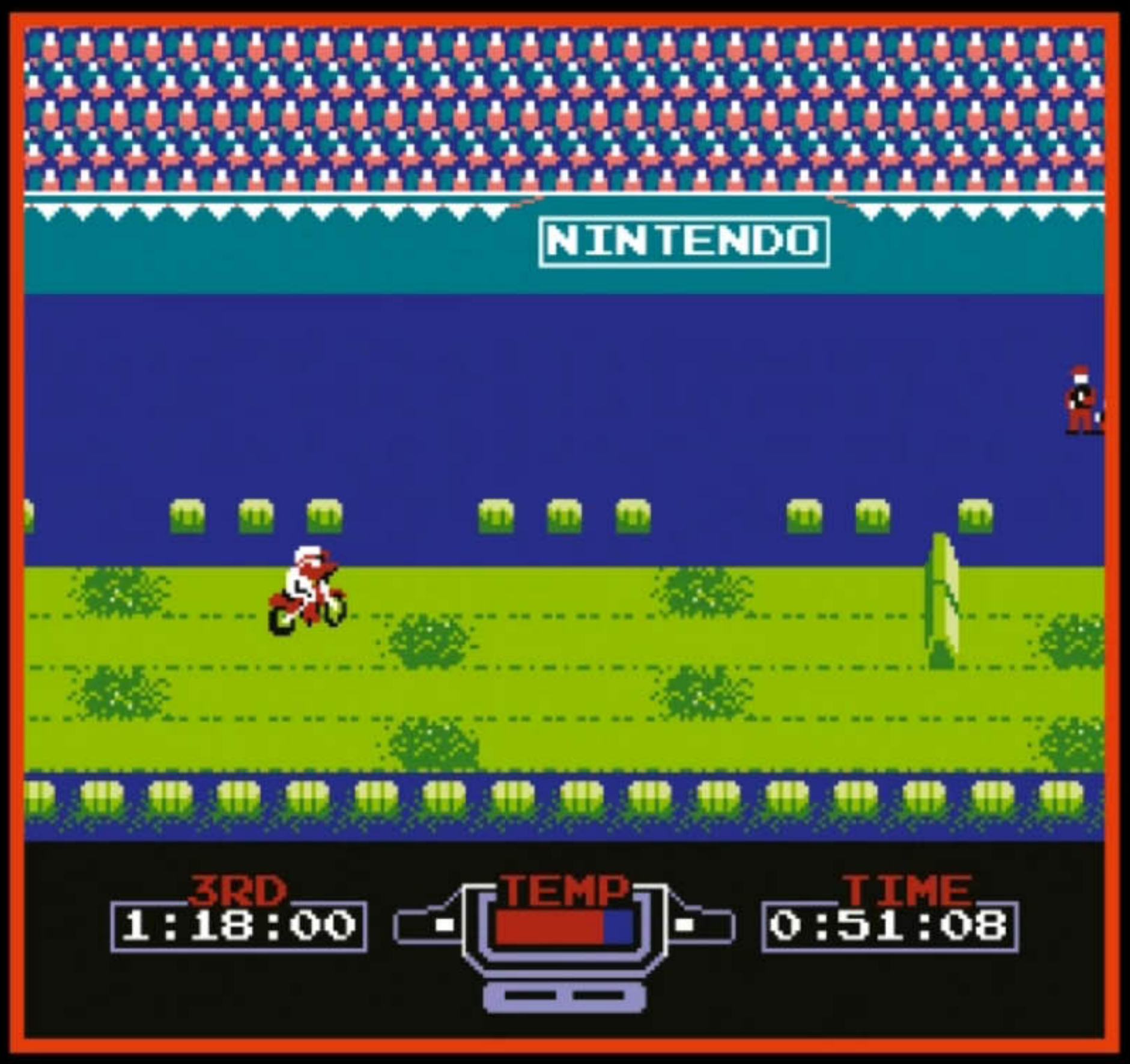
CHIP ‘N DALE: RESCUE RANGERS

■ **DEVELOPER:** Capcom ■ **YEAR:** 1990

■ **GENRE:** Platform

23 **While Capcom is** best known for *Street Fighter* and *Resident Evil* today, the NES era saw the company make a name for itself based on a range of high quality platform games. The gameplay is good here, but it’s striking how few cartoon licences capture the look and feel of their source material as well as *Chip ‘N Dale*, the game boasts detailed sprites and colourful backgrounds which emphasise the size of our heroes.





EXCITEBIKE

■ **DEVELOPER:** Nintendo R&D1

■ **YEAR:** 1984 ■ **GENRE:** Racing

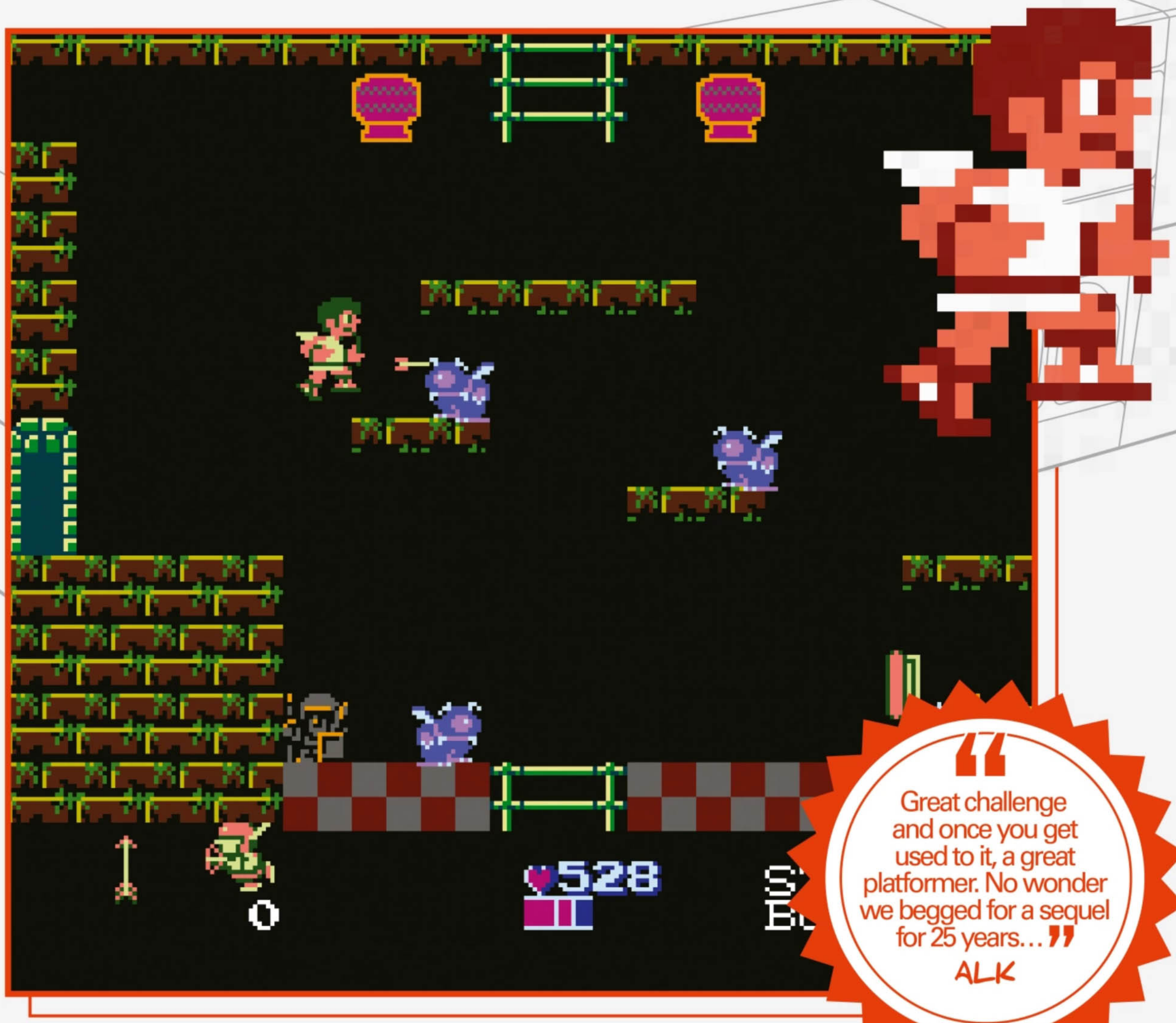
22 **One of the** interesting things about the NES is that the machine had a very long shelf life, with over a decade between its Japanese release as the Famicom and the final officially licensed games in the mid-Nineties. With so much time for developers to extract the best performance from the machine and all of the additional chips utilised over the years, it’s easy to expect that the console’s early releases would be overshadowed by the more complex games – but that’s not the case, as games like *Excitebike* show.

Excitebike is a simple game. Either alone or with computer controlled riders, your goal is to beat target times on each course in order to progress. This is complicated by obstacles including grass, mud patches, barriers, and the ever-present ramps, which require players to correct their landing angle as they fall – a simple challenge, but one which remains challenging to consistently perform over a long period. Falling off your bike will cost you valuable time, as will overheating the bike by overusing the high speed button. As the game goes on, the courses become more complex, with high angle ramps and fewer clear stretches on the track.

The main thing that set *Excitebike* apart from other NES games was the inclusion of a level editor. While the option to save and load these creations was never available to the West as it required the Japan-only Famicom Data Recorder add-on, the mode extended the game’s life considerably once they’d exhausted all of the pre-designed stages. While *Excitebike* might not have been the flashiest game in many players’ NES collections, the combination of this mode and the compelling gameplay meant that it was often revisited.

“Typical Nintendo, simple as anything, but hard to master, and it is so much fun.”

adippm82

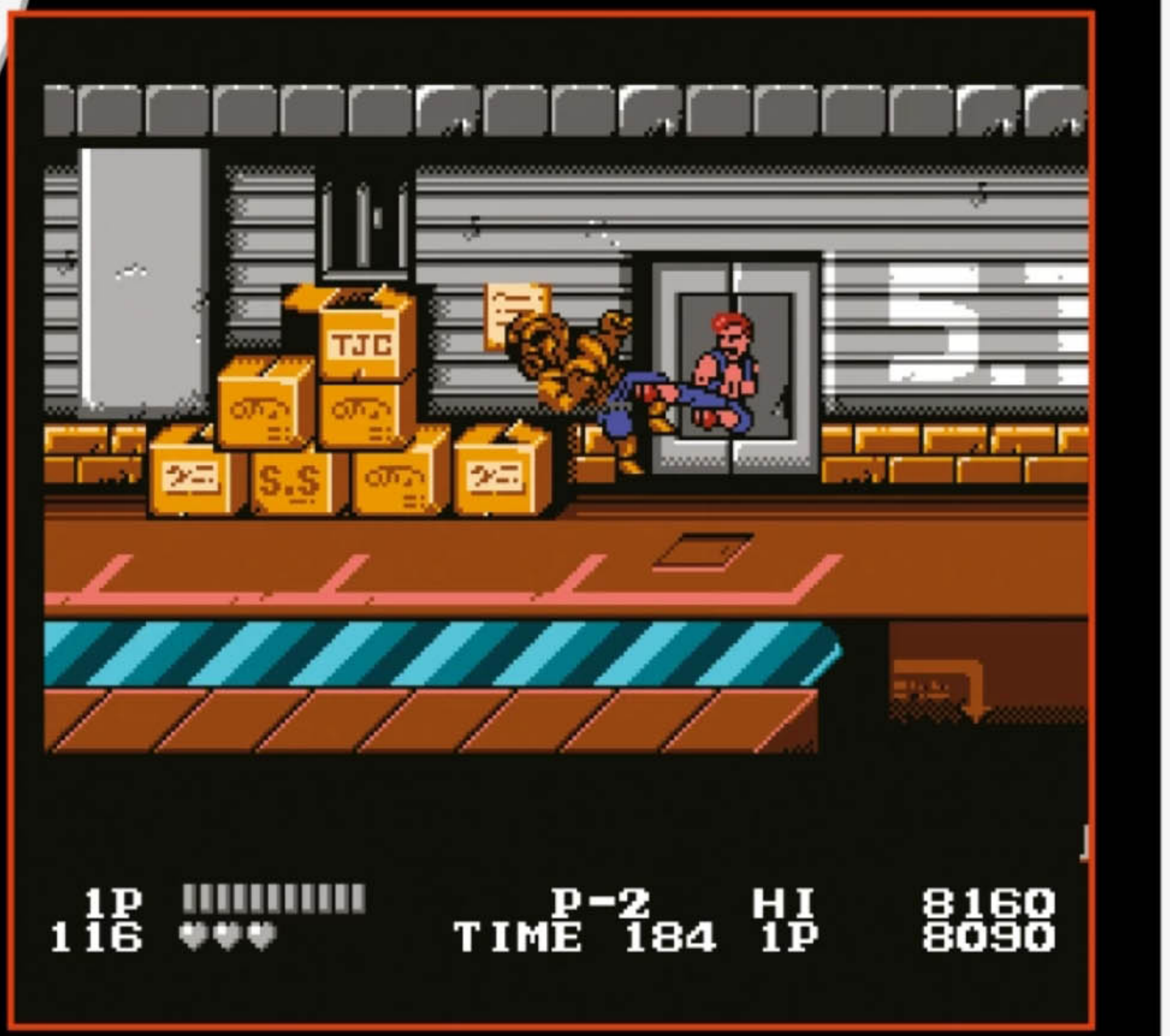


KID ICARUS

DEVELOPER: Nintendo R&D1 **YEAR:** 1986 **GENRE:** Platform

21 **Right from the** start, *Kid Icarus* is a game that just *feels* different from its platforming contemporaries. In other games you'll typically traverse a stage from left to right, but *Kid Icarus* starts you off by sending you on a skyward journey, with a playfield that wraps horizontally across the screen – when Pit walks off the right edge, he'll appear on the left. It's a feeling of difference that permeates the game, as while the game offers items and upgrades, it never crosses over into RPG territory. For many years this was one of Nintendo's forgotten properties, with only a Game Boy sequel to continue its lineage, until Pit's adventures were continued in the shooter *Kid Icarus: Uprising* on the Nintendo 3DS.

> "Great challenge and once you get used to it, a great platformer. No wonder we begged for a sequel for 25 years…"
>
> ALK



DOUBLE DRAGON

DEVELOPER: Technos **YEAR:** 1988 **GENRE:** Beat-'em-up

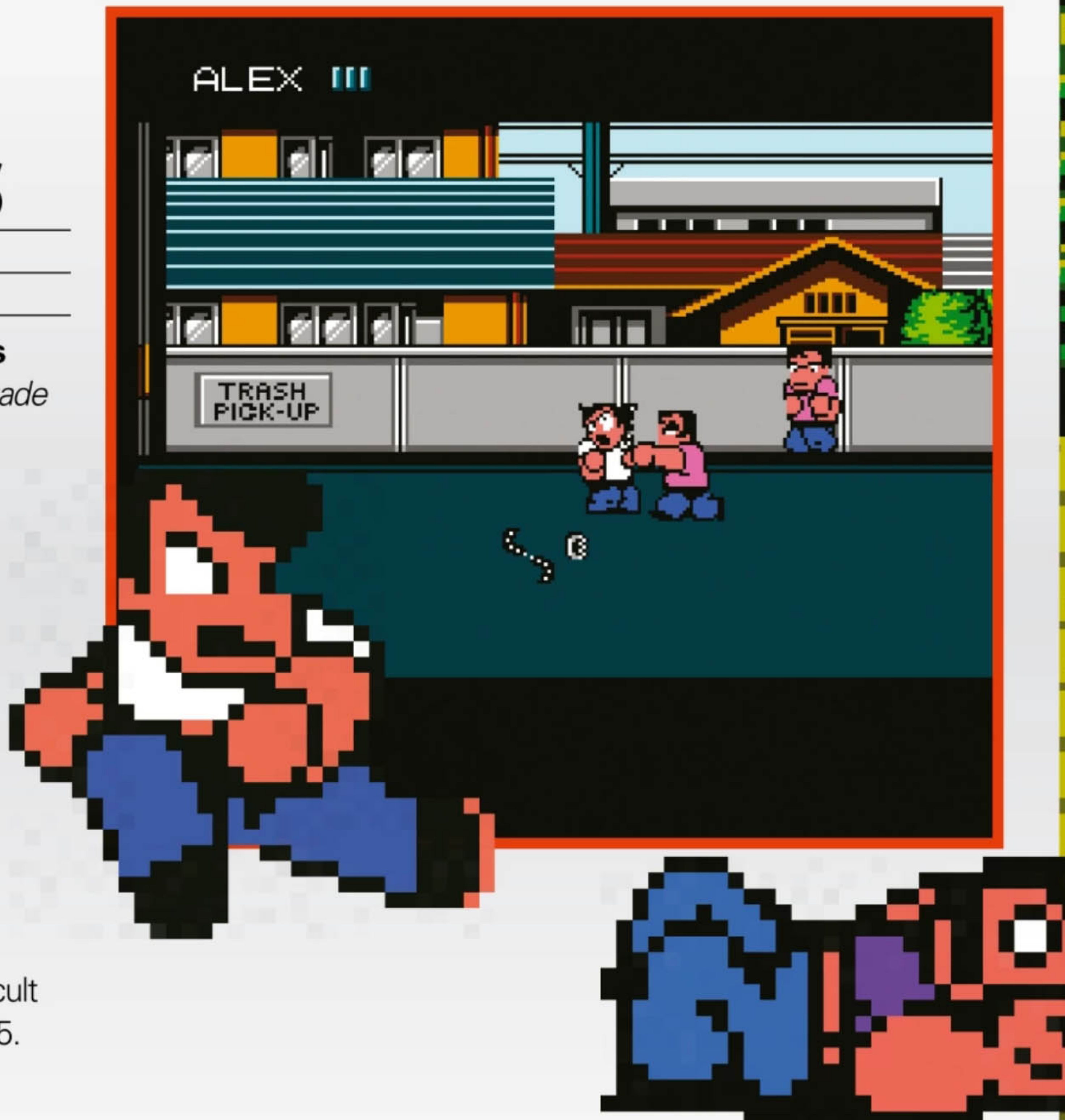
19 **The hit beat-'em-up** came to the NES, but rescuing Marian from the clutches of Machine Gun Willy wasn't quite the same proposition as in the arcades. For a start, the simultaneous two-player mode is nowhere to be found, and enemy numbers are limited. Further, stages received some interesting redesigns and all but the most basic fighting moves were gained through an experience system. Despite these changes, *Double Dragon* remained a compelling and challenging beat-'em-up that retained enough of the arcade essence to be truly worthy of the name. Multiplayer fans can also check out Mode B, which features larger character sprites in one-on-one battles and it even allows players to control enemy characters – an interesting novelty, to say the least.

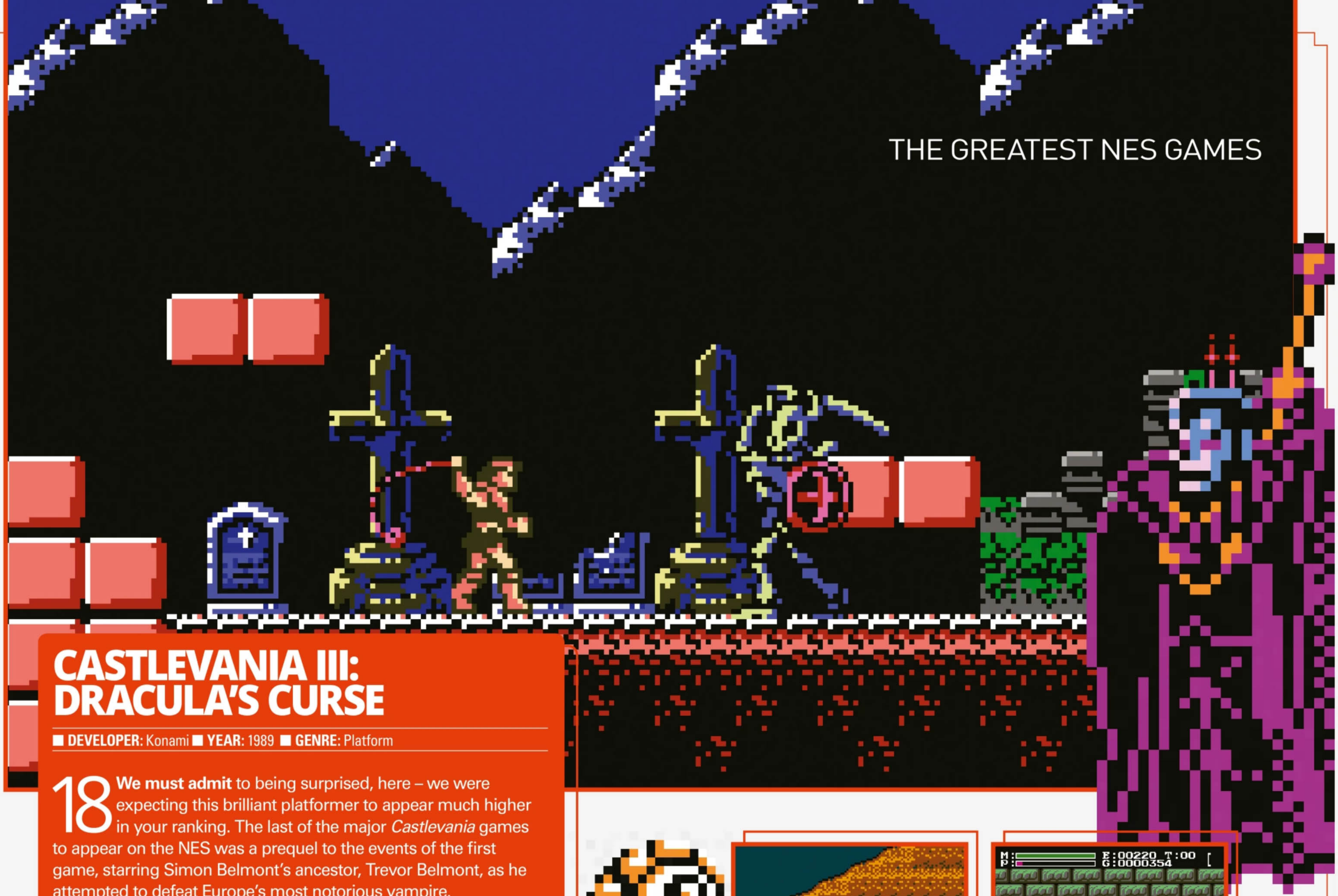
RIVER CITY RANSOM / STREET GANGS

DEVELOPER: Technos

YEAR: 1989 **GENRE:** Beat-'em-up

20 **Following arcade success** with games such as *Renegade* and *Double Dragon*, beat-'em-up innovators Technos returned with a NES title that took the genre in a more console-focused direction. As well as beating up all manner of weirdly-named gangs like The Squids and The Generic Dudes, players can learn moves, develop stats, and even buy items. *River City Ransom* wasn't a huge success when it arrived in North America and it didn't fare a great deal better when it was released in Europe as *Street Gangs*, but the game's reputation has grown, thanks to a loyal cult following, earning its place in your top 25.



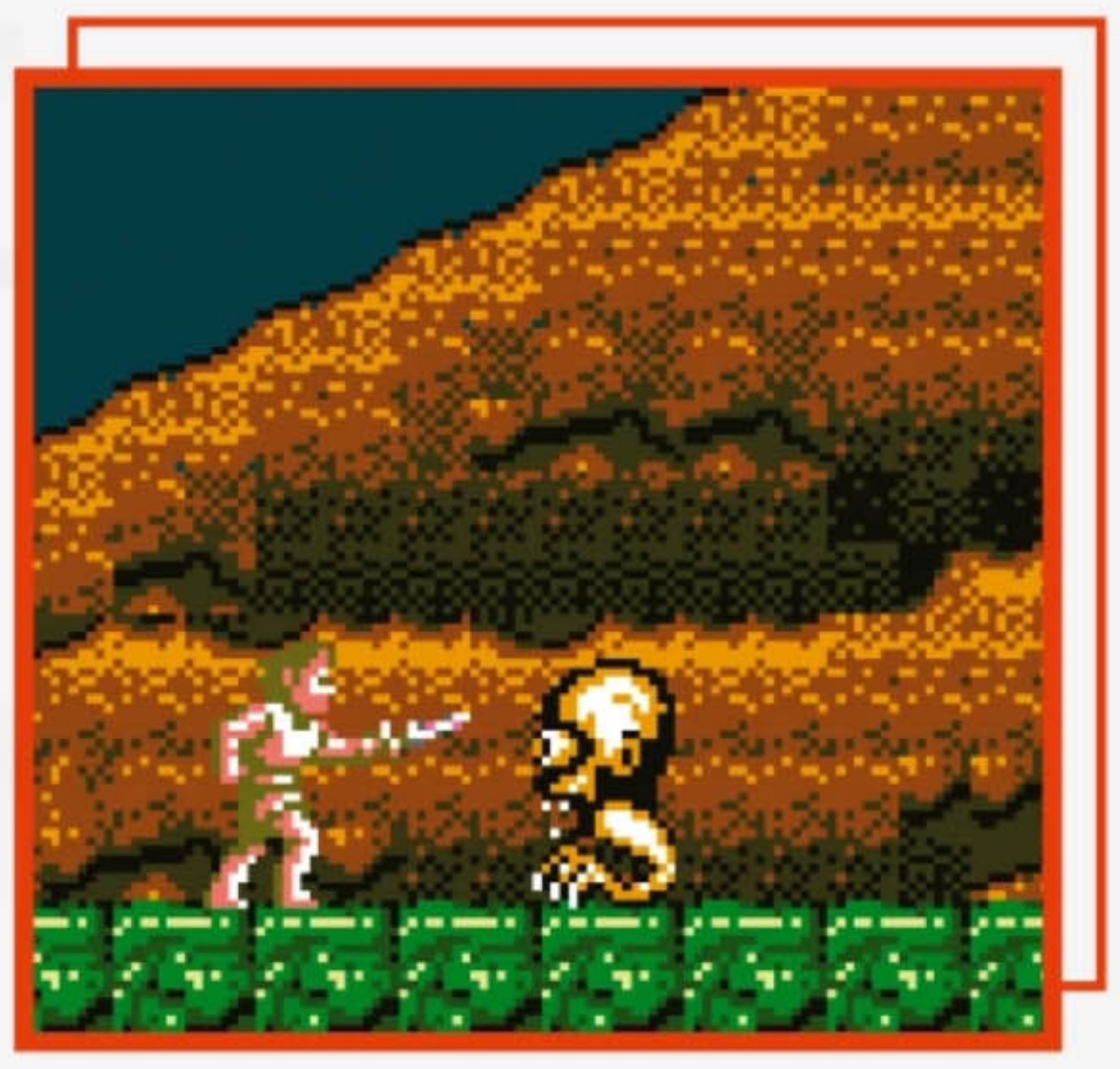


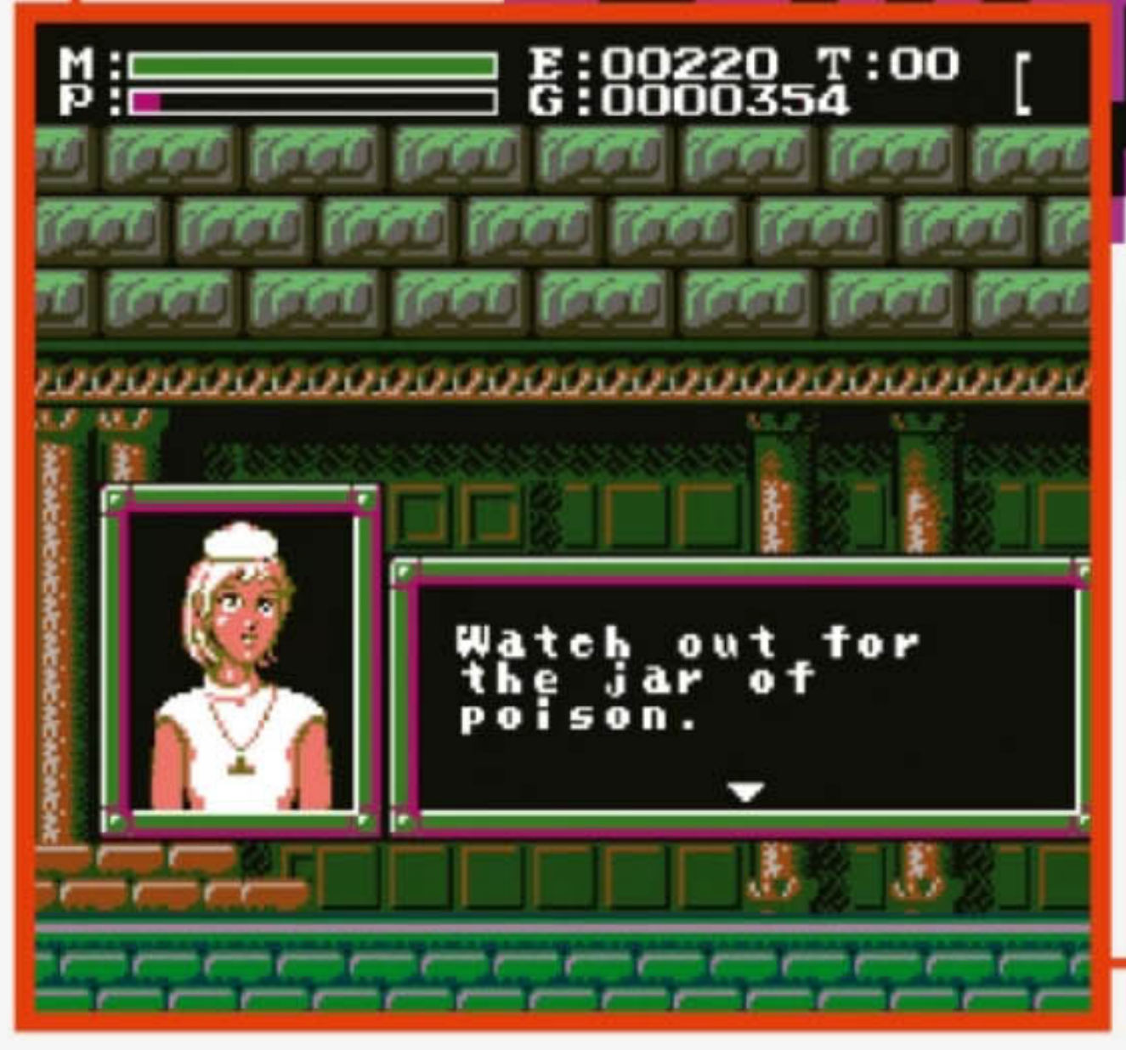
CASTLEVANIA III: DRACULA'S CURSE

DEVELOPER: Konami **YEAR:** 1989 **GENRE:** Platform

18 **We must admit** to being surprised, here – we were expecting this brilliant platformer to appear much higher in your ranking. The last of the major *Castlevania* games to appear on the NES was a prequel to the events of the first game, starring Simon Belmont's ancestor, Trevor Belmont, as he attempted to defeat Europe's most notorious vampire.

The game left the RPG elements of *Castlevania II: Simon's Quest* and returned to the platform action template of the original game. However, new improvements included a non-linear level structure, additional playable characters with their own unique abilities (including *Symphony Of The Night* star, Alucard) and a more challenging second quest for players that have finished the game. In part thanks to the use of the expensive MMC5 chip, *Castlevania III* boasts some of the most impressive visuals on the system, and the action is accompanied by an excellent soundtrack.





Watch out for the jar of poison.

FAXANADU

DEVELOPER: Hudson Soft **YEAR:** 1987 **GENRE:** Action-RPG

16 **We hear your** cries, dear readers! *Faxanadu* is a game that you've highlighted as being something of a forgotten gem, and its appearance in the top 25 is testament to your strength of feeling on this matter. The player is cast as a wanderer who returns to his home town only to find it in a state of severe decline, and being attacked by dwarves. The high fantasy setting is aided by the fact that *Faxanadu* doesn't utilise the cartoonish look that many NES games adopted, giving it a more mature impression.

The game itself is a side-scrolling action-RPG of the kind that will be familiar to players of games such as *Zelda II* and *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*. *Faxanadu* includes many of the key trappings of the RPG genre, with a protagonist whose capabilities grow with experience, a wide range of non-player characters to chat to, and full inventory options, but combat and exploration are handled in a traditional platform game fashion. Give it a go if you haven't yet played it – with prices hovering around £10, it won't break the bank and you wont regret it.

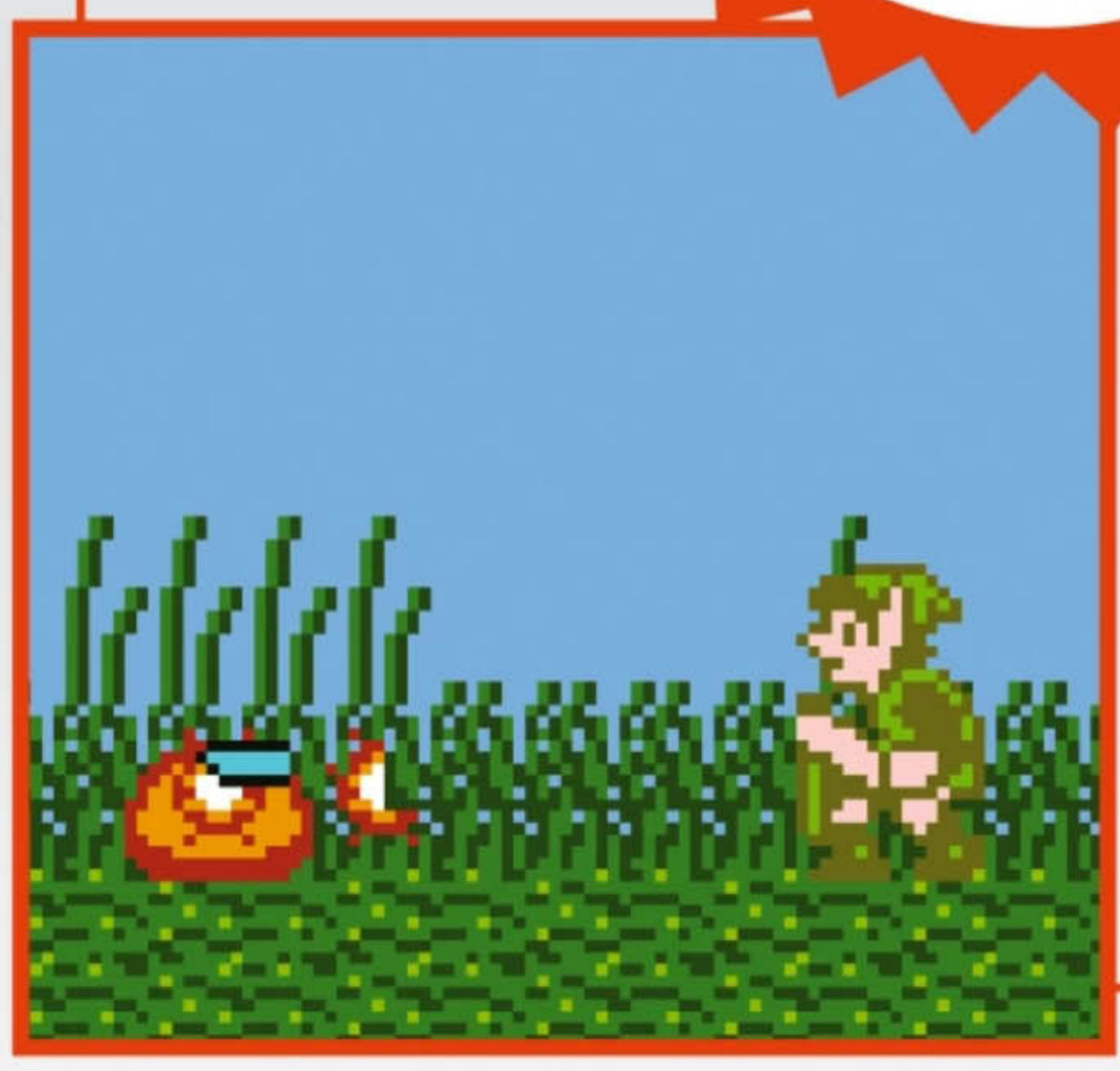
ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK

DEVELOPER: Nintendo R&D4 **YEAR:** 1987 **GENRE:** Action-RPG

17 **Despite huge sales** of over 4 million copies, the first *Zelda* sequel hasn't always received a huge amount of love over the years. However, lots of you hold the opinion that it is unfairly maligned and we're inclined to agree. *Link's Adventure* retained the first game's top-down viewpoint for overworld exploration, but the meat of the gameplay was found in side-scrolling combat sections. Additional RPG elements were also introduced in *Zelda II*, including experience levels, a magic system and more extensive interaction with the non-player characters you found in towns.

Players have come down hard on *Zelda II* for departing so heavily from the gameplay of the original title, and future 2D *Zelda* games stuck much more closely to the top-down action of the first game. However, it highlights Nintendo's willingness to experiment as a game developer – a commendable quality, even if it doesn't always guarantee popular results.

> "I know people think it's the black sheep of the *Zelda* series, but it should be given a chance 'cos it's a great game."
> Spock1OM



DUCKTALES

DEVELOPER: Capcom

YEAR: 1989 **GENRE:** Platform

15 **Capcom offered an** excellent choice of licensed Disney platformers on the NES, and you guys liked *DuckTales* the most. We love Scrooge McDuck hopping around on his cane, and the structure which requires you to obtain items in various stages to progress is very cool.

KIRBY'S ADVENTURE

DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory

YEAR: 1993 **GENRE:** Platform

14 **Players that kept** their NES hardware deep into the 16-bit era were rewarded with this incredible platformer. It wasn't the hardest game to complete, but the ability to copy enemy attacks offered a twist on the platform genre which ensured that we remained interested throughout.

SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

DEVELOPER: Nintendo R&D4

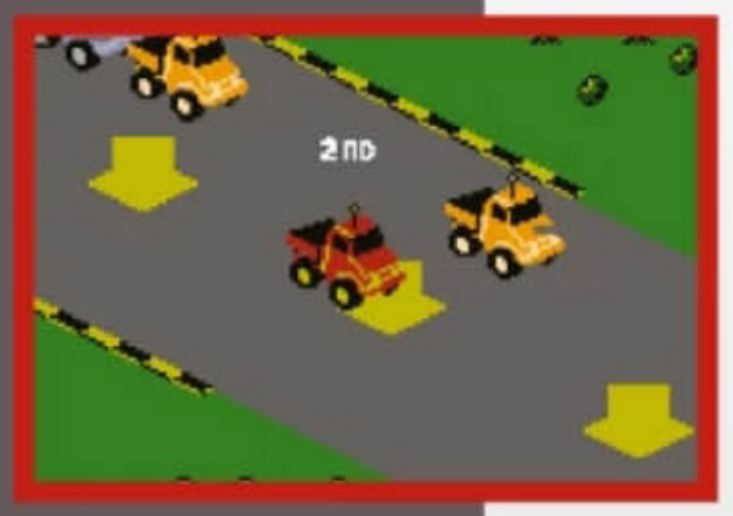
YEAR: 1988 **GENRE:** Platform

13 **While this *Mario* game** wasn't always a *Mario* game and feels slightly different as a result of that, the fact remains that it's still an excellently designed platformer. Being able to control Peach and Toad was very cool, and Luigi became distinct from his brother with his floaty jumps.

RC PRO-AM

DEVELOPER: Rare

YEAR: 1987 **GENRE:** Racing



12 **This racer** is one of Rare's earliest hits on a Nintendo platform, and features radio-controlled cars battling to take victory across 24 tracks. We mean it when we say battling, too – these little cars pack some firepower, with bombs and missiles available to take out rivals.

MIKE TYSON'S PUNCH-OUT!!

DEVELOPER: Nintendo R&D3

YEAR: 1987 **GENRE:** Fighting

11 **Taking the action** of Nintendo's arcade boxing series and taking it to the home consoles, *Punch-Out!!* knocked players out with memorable characters and compelling mechanics. Best of all, Tyson himself put in an appearance.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

DEVELOPER: Konami **YEAR:** 1989 **GENRE:** Platform

10 **If there was** one thing that kids couldn't get enough of in the late Eighties and early Nineties, it was this quartet of pizza-loving crime fighters, and Konami sensibly snapped up the videogame rights early. The result was a brilliant, strong platformer, although one which had the incredible ability to frustrate players – in particular, the infamous underwater bomb disarming stage is one of the most frustrating levels in any videogame ever.

While the game was popular internationally, UK-based Nintendo fans have a particular fondness for the game as its placement in a NES bundle over Christmas 1990 meant that it was the first game many players owned. The presence of the Turtles drove up desire for the NES, and even helped it briefly overtake Master System sales in the UK.

> "The game that made me want a NES. I remember recording the ad for the Turtles box set and watching it every day."
>
> RodimusPrime

DUCK HUNT

DEVELOPER: Nintendo R&D1

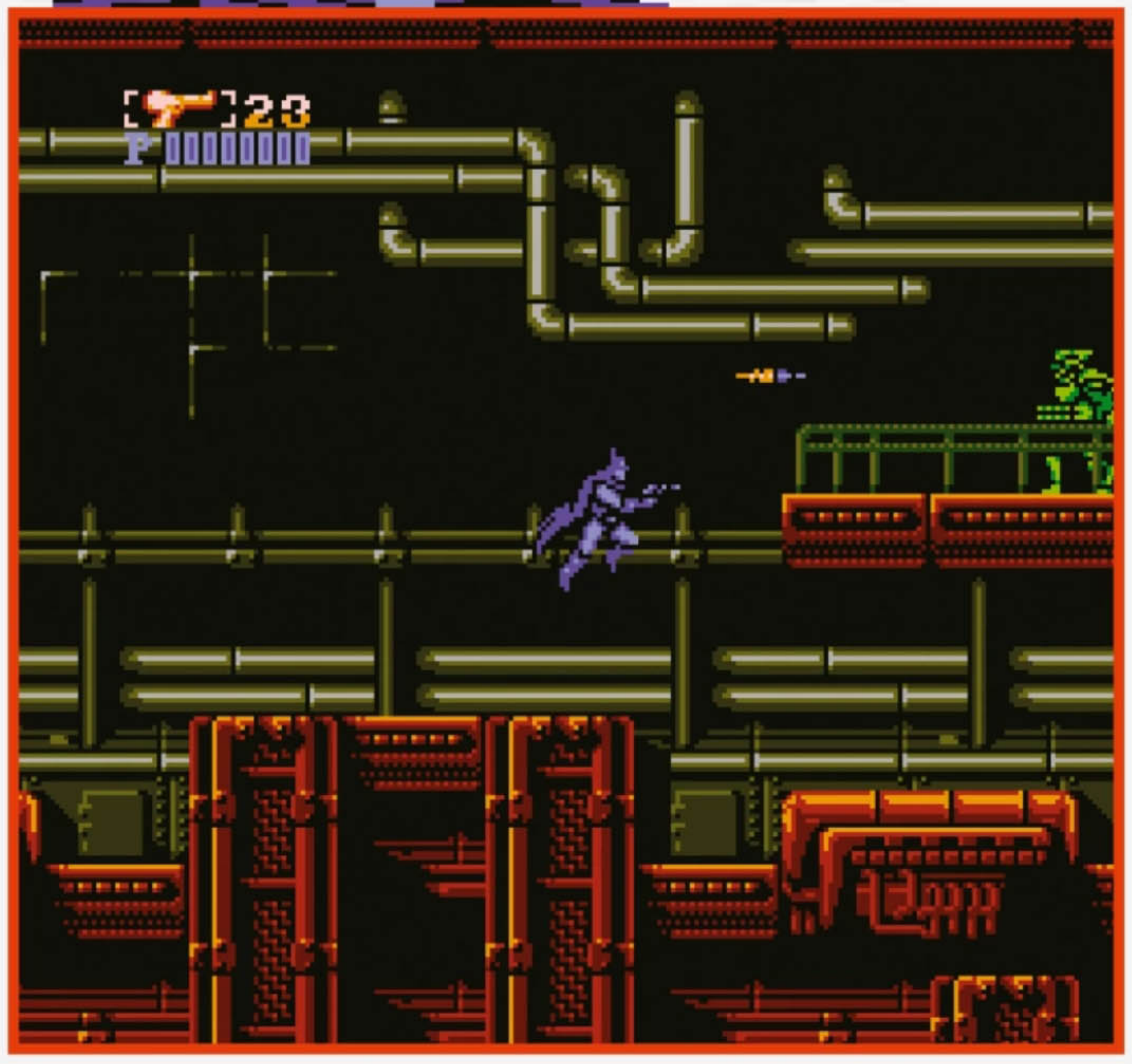
YEAR: 1984 **GENRE:** Lightgun Shoot-'em-up

9 **Packed in with** all but the basic NES console bundles, *Duck Hunt* was a cornerstone of many gamers' NES experiences and was the only Zapper title to make your top 25 list. What makes *Duck Hunt* so memorable is its simple yet captivating gameplay – one or two ducks fly out and you need to shoot them down, ideally with as few misses as possible. There's also the clay pigeon game in Mode C, in which discs fly into the distance.

But let's be honest, it's all about bagging birds – and of course that pesky dog. He certainly adds character, proudly displaying your hits when you make them and mocking you when you fail to do so. Our canine companion's sniggering definitely triggers some of our more violent urges, but try as we might, we can never take out our frustrations on him by just blasting him away. That is true sadness, there.

> "This is a great little game, introducing many a fresh keen-eyed marksman to the joys of the lightgun."
>
> Jim Bagley, SpecialFX

Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
NES VERSION
POWER
RESET

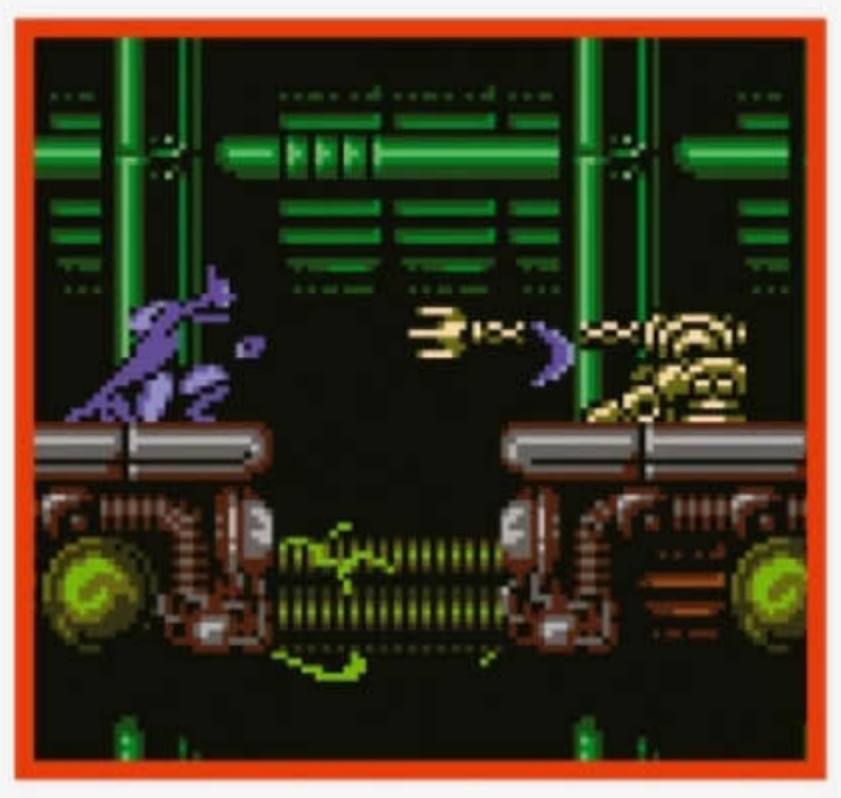


BATMAN

DEVELOPER: Sunsoft **YEAR:** 1989 **GENRE:** Platform

8 **The caped crusader** has had a number of videogame incarnations over the years, but few have accompanied a peak interest in Batman like this one, which followed in the wake of the 1989 film starring Michael Keaton. The videogame was themed after the film and took the form of a platformer which allowed you to fight the likes of Killer Moth, Firebug and, of course, the Joker as you sought to clean up Gotham. The game has since achieved recognition on its own terms, with one company even releasing an action figure in NES colours.

While Batman's weaponry was present, one of the coolest features in *Batman* was actually the ability to leap off walls with a secondary jump. Rarely seen at the time, this feature enabled our hero to ascend through narrow vertical passages and save himself from otherwise fatal situations.

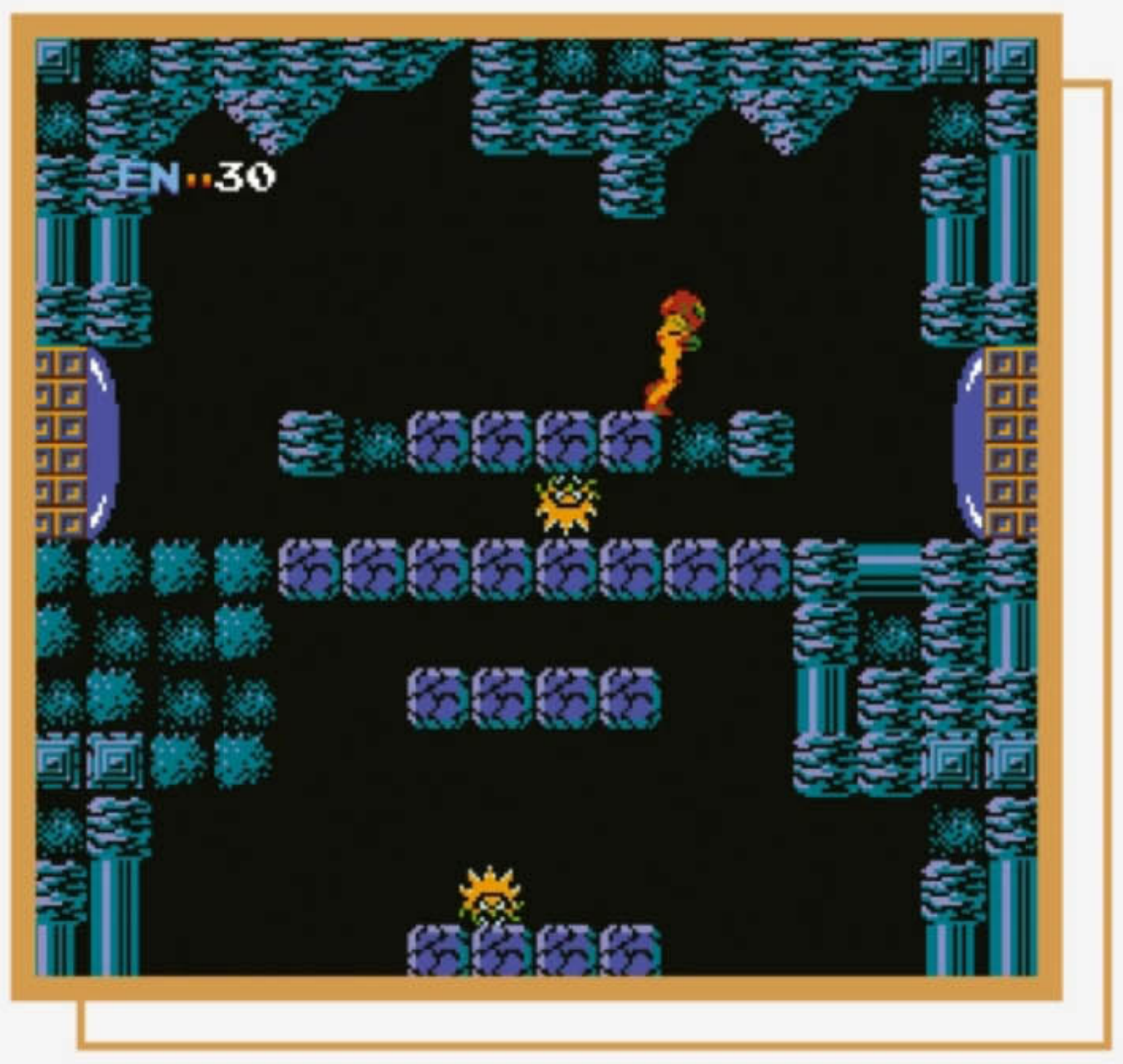


METROID

DEVELOPER: Nintendo **YEAR:** 1986 **GENRE:** Platform

7 **At its heart,** *Metroid* is a simple game – a platform-shooter in which Samus Aran seeks to recapture the dangerous Metroid organisms, set on the planet Zebes. However, it introduced many players to a new style of platform game, in which exploration was key and new abilities enabled access to additional areas. This template is so closely associated with *Metroid* that it co-named the Metroidvania subgenre, along with the *Castlevania* series which later adopted this style.

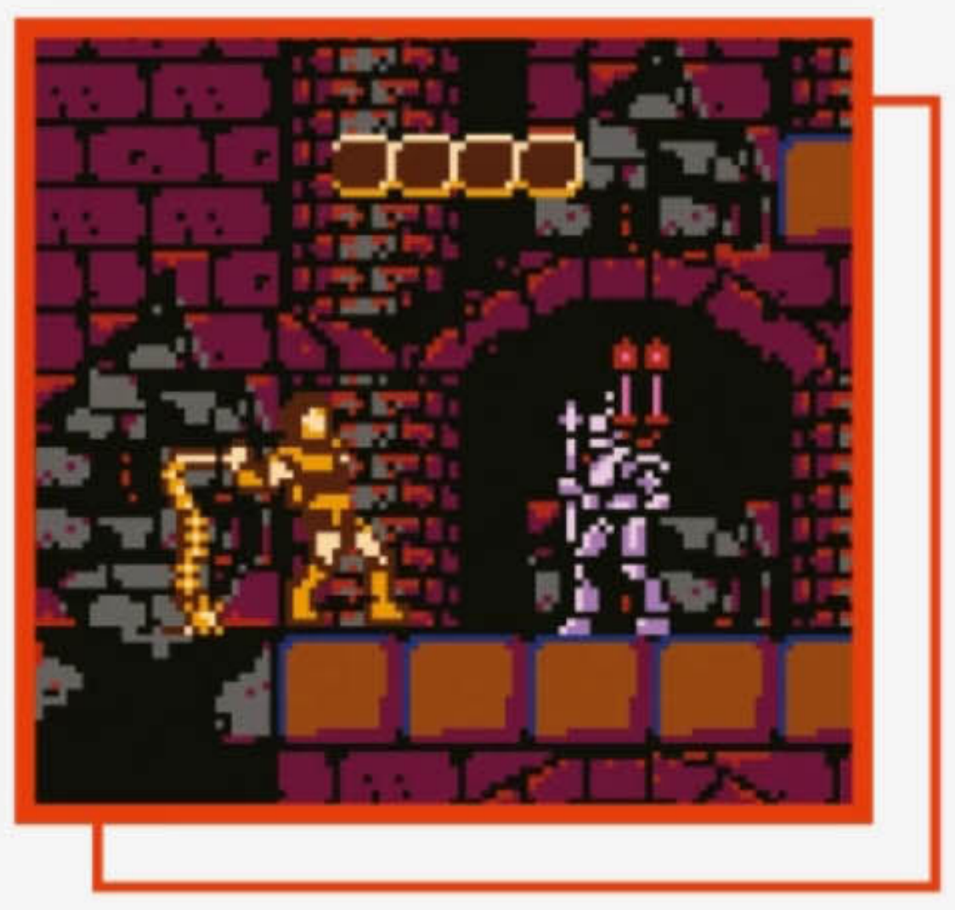
While the action is all well and good, *Metroid*'s best bits are the memorable twists which stick in the memory long after you've beaten the game. The revelation that Samus Aran is a female protagonist might have lost its shock factor, but its importance remains. As for the other twist – well, don't put your pad down after Mother Brain has been defeated…



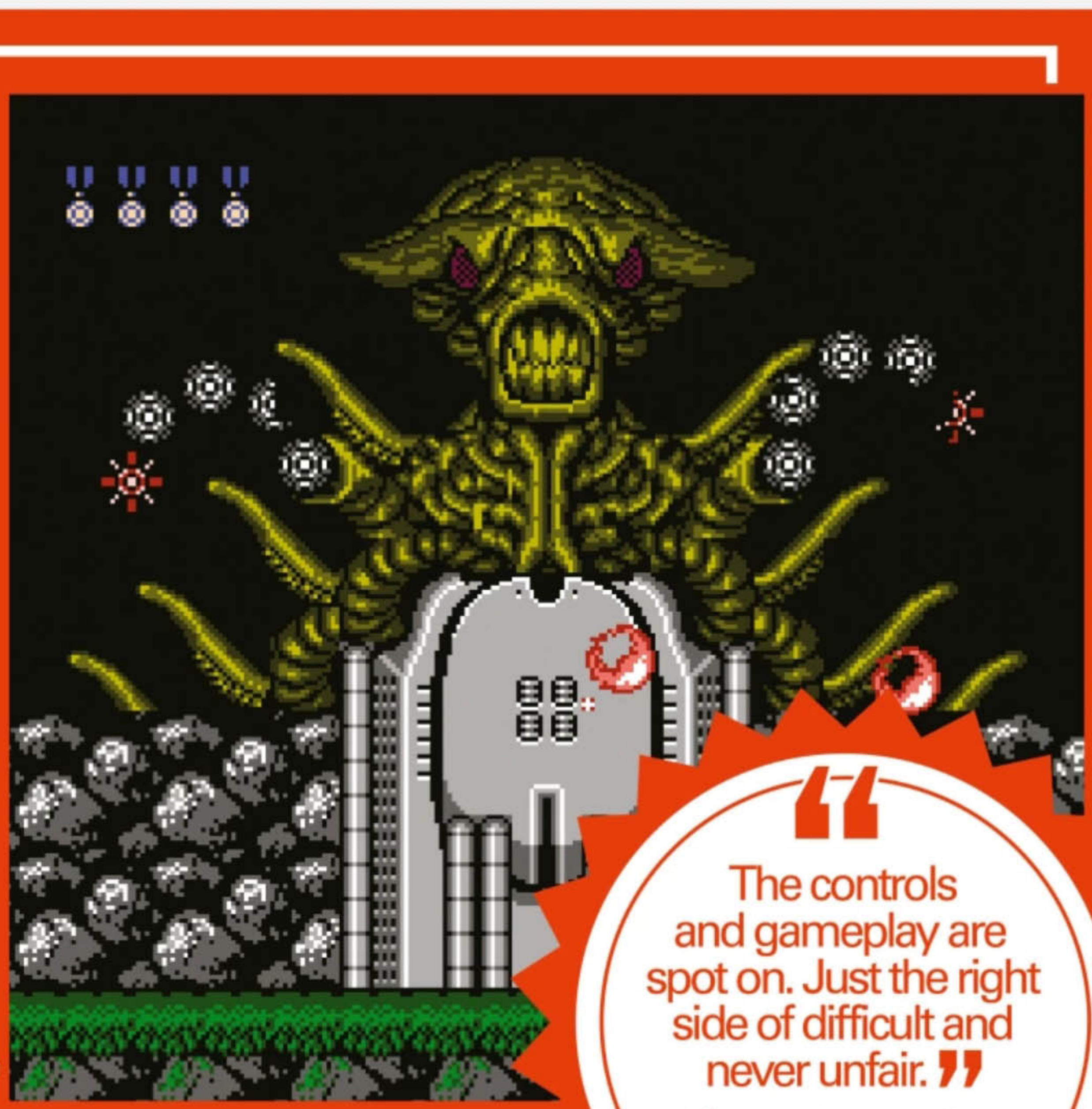
CASTLEVANIA

DEVELOPER: Konami **YEAR:** 1986 **GENRE:** Platform

6 **Konami's developers rarely** seemed more at home than when they were working on the NES, coming up with hits such as *Castlevania*. Borrowing some thematic cues from Capcom's *Ghosts 'n Goblins*, the game casts you as Simon Belmont, a vampire hunter out to kill Dracula. Each stage pits you against all manner of supernatural villains, but is well-designed to fit the crumbling castle theme and offers strong level design. The game is visually strong and offers memorable tunes, while tight control enables precise platforming and offers the use of secondary weapons such as axes and crucifixes, rounding off an excellent package.



> "Me and my brother would play it and we'd be like 'who's going to be Arnie, who's going to be Stallone?'"
>
> Claudio Sanchez, Coheed and Cambria

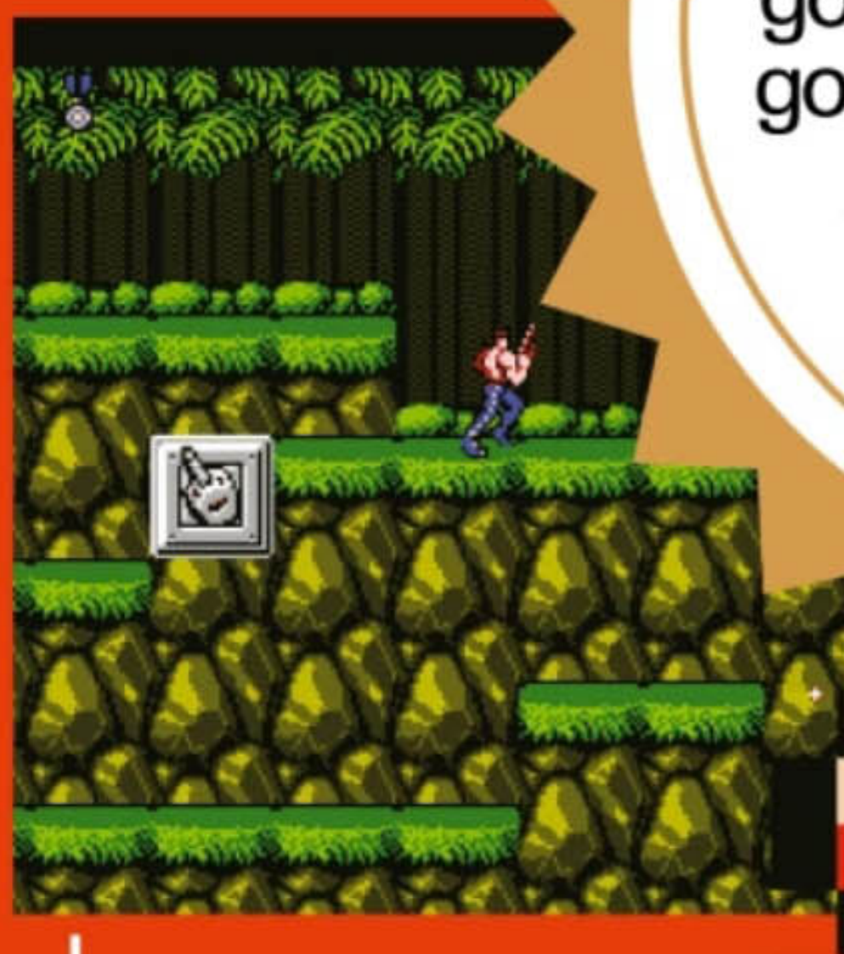


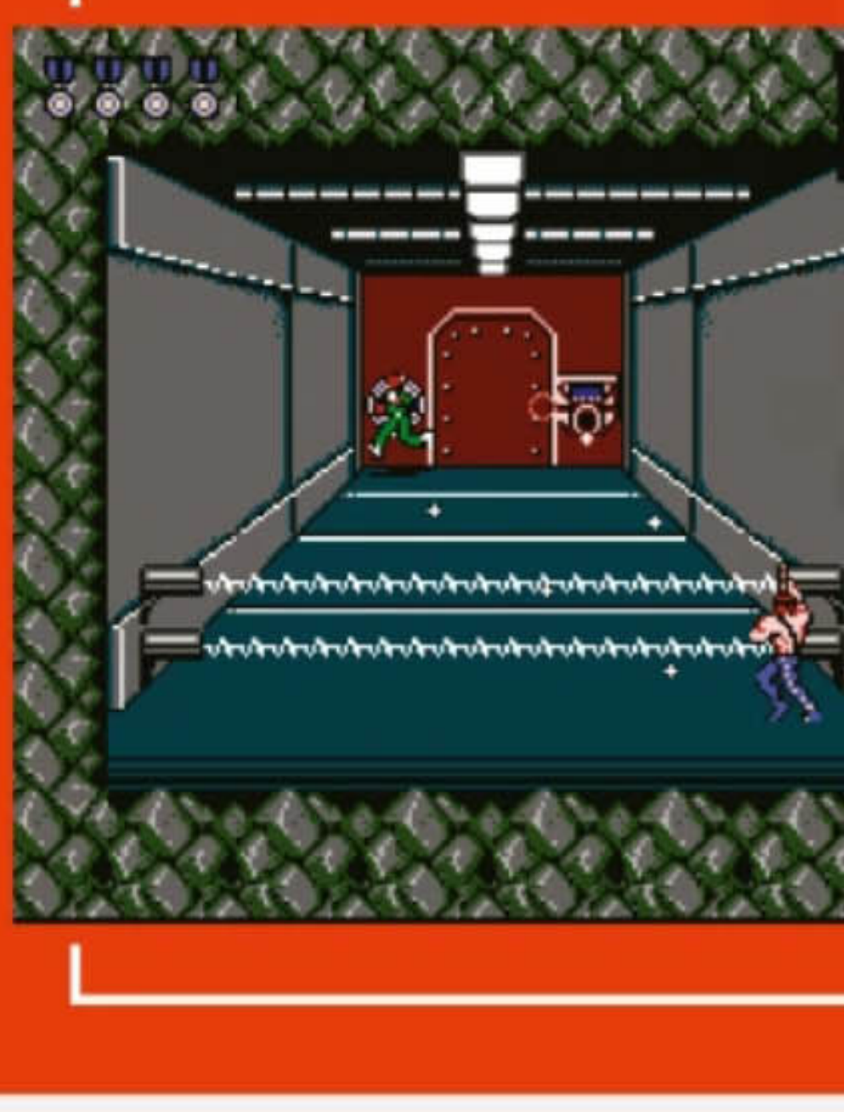
CONTRA / PROBOTECTOR

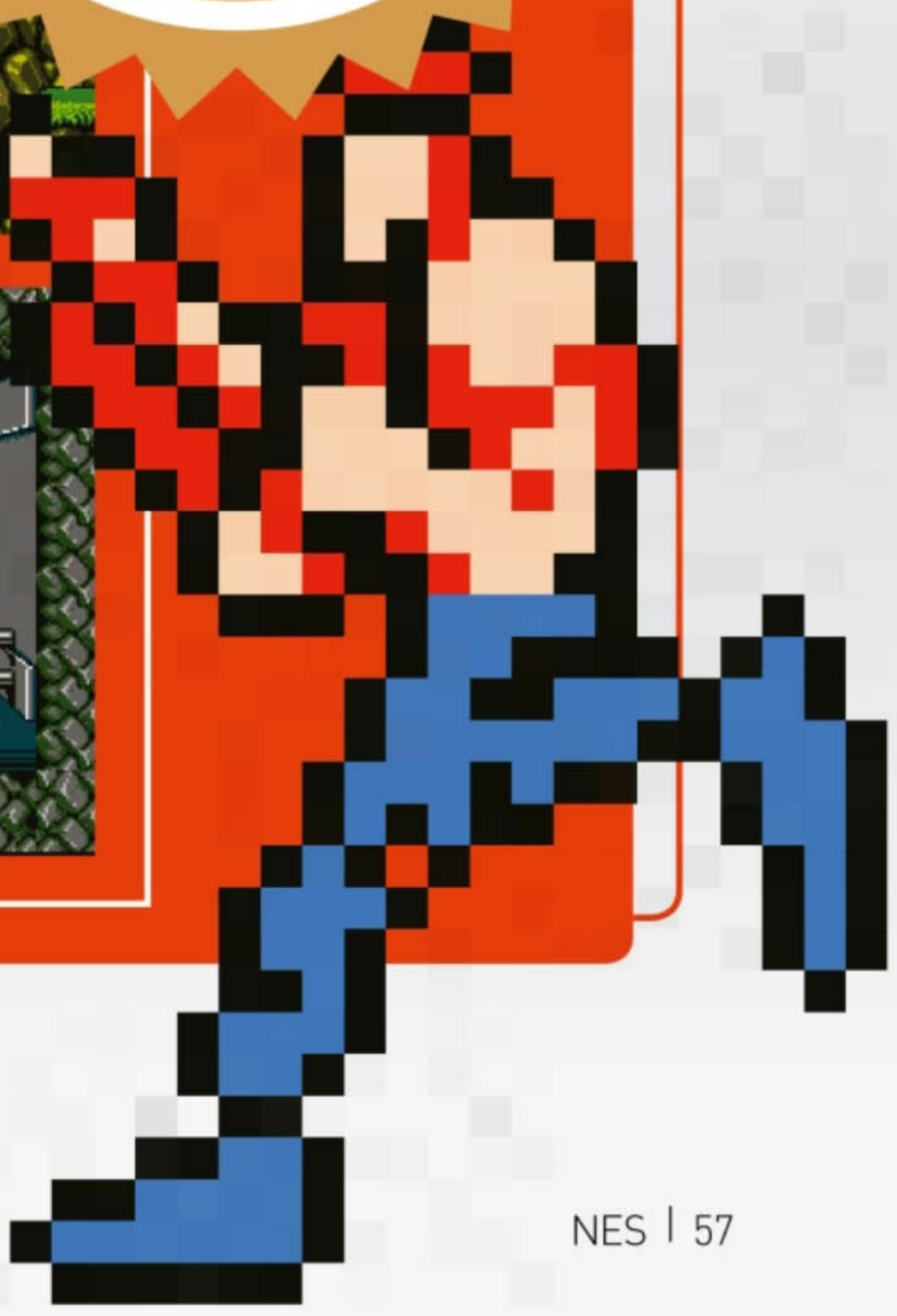
DEVELOPER: KONAMI

YEAR: 1988 **GENRE:** Run-and-gun

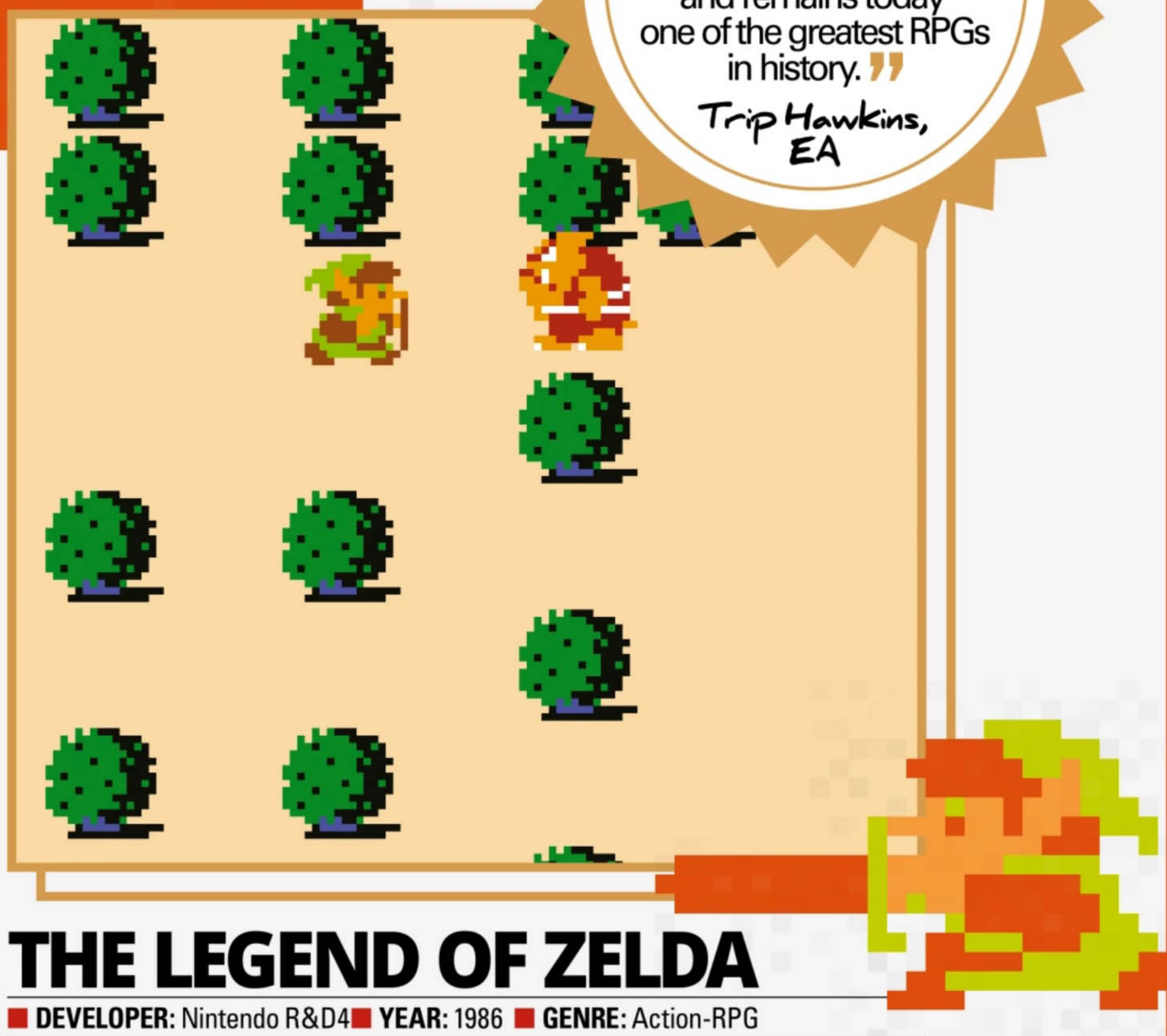
5 **This classic run-and-gun** is your favourite arcade conversion for the NES. *Contra* is a great example of Konami at the height of its powers. While the NES version of *Contra* makes a few changes from the coin-op, the game still offers the key things that make it so appealing: frantic action and a very stiff challenge. Though the game was renamed for Europe and censored in order to circumvent German censorship laws, the gameplay shone through.







> "The controls and gameplay are spot on. Just the right side of difficult and never unfair."
>
> theantmeister

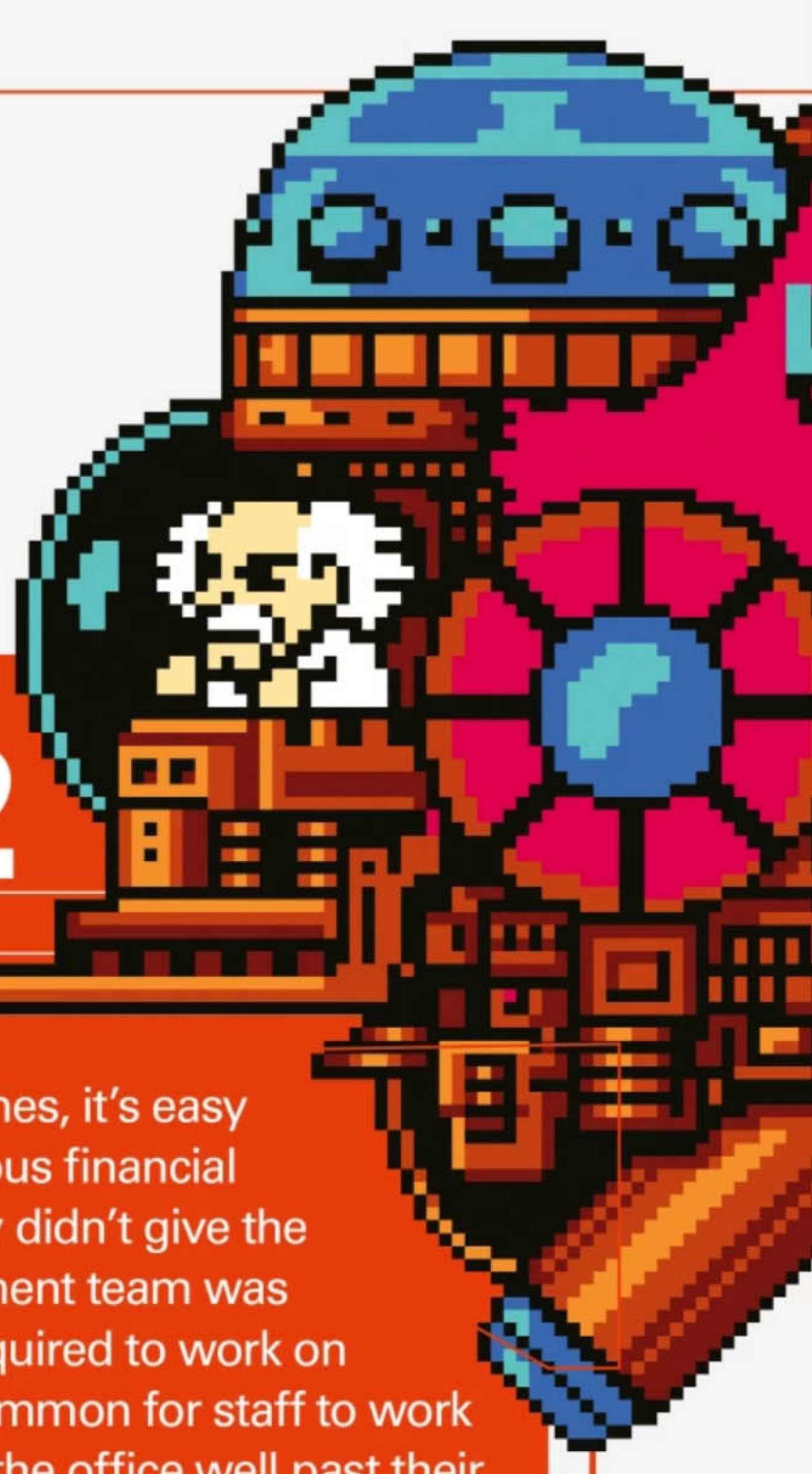


> “The Legend Of *Zelda* brought the true power of the role-playing genre to console players and remains today one of the greatest RPGs in history.”
>
> Trip Hawkins, EA

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

■ **DEVELOPER:** Nintendo R&D4 ■ **YEAR:** 1986 ■ **GENRE:** Action-RPG

4 **From the second** you start Link's first adventure and set off towards the cave, the game starts sinking its hooks into you with the most lo-fi rendition of the now-familiar theme music – and just as later *Zelda* games can trace their elaborate scores back to Koji Kondo's chip music, they can do the same with their game design. The original *Legend Of Zelda* exemplifies the excellence of the core *Zelda* formula – a mixture of exploration, puzzles, and combat that draws you into the game until you're determined to see it through to the end. Plus, who doesn't love those beautiful gold cartridges?



MEGA MAN 2

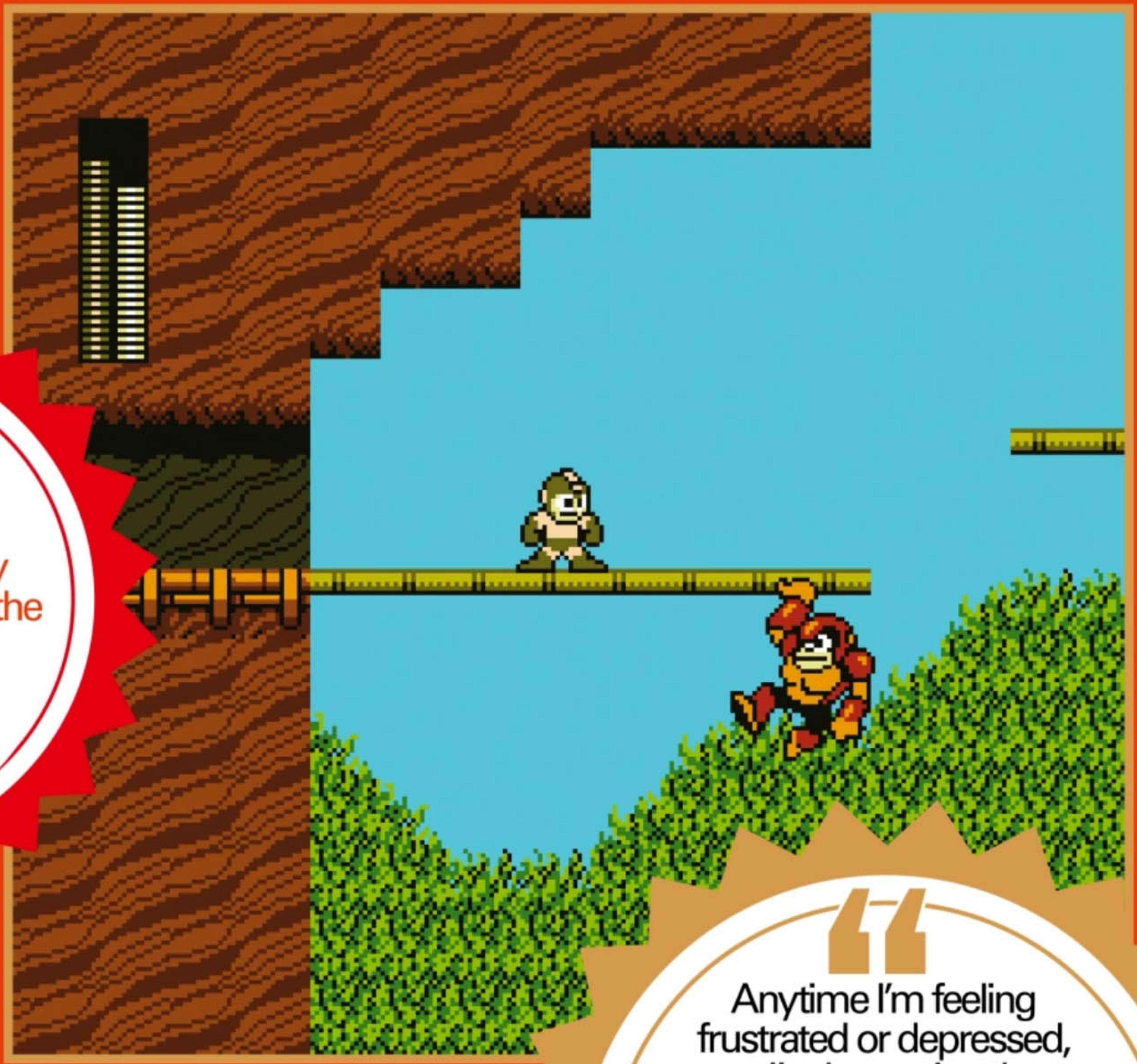
■ **DEVELOPER:** Capcom

■ **YEAR:** 1988 ■ **GENRE:** Platform

3 **After almost three** decades of *Mega Man* games, it's easy to forget that the first one was not a tremendous financial success for Capcom. As a result, the company didn't give the green light for a sequel immediately – the development team was permitted to work on *Mega Man 2*, but was also required to work on other projects simultaneously. As a result, it was common for staff to work very long hours making the game, often staying in the office well past their regular working hours. *Mega Man 2* was a real labour of love.

For teams developing sequels, it can be tricky to work out what is broken and in need of fixing, and what is better left alone. Capcom trod that fine line carefully and reaped the rewards. Elements that were preserved from the original game include its platform-shooter set up and its non-linear structure, in which a player chooses a stage based on which Robot Master they'd like to take down. As before, once you've downed a boss you'll gain access to their weapon, some of which are more effective than others.

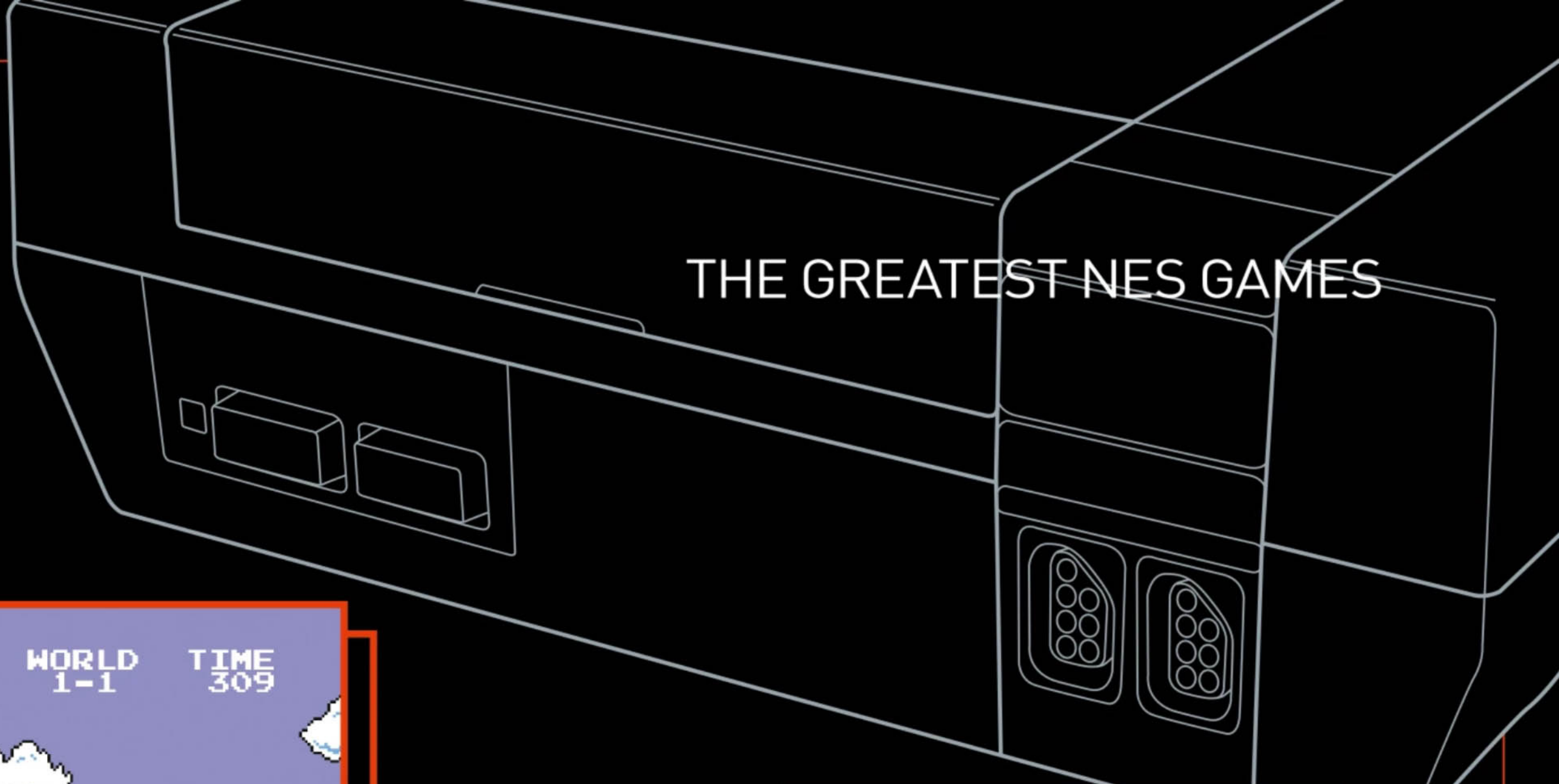
However, it's the improvements which make *Mega Man 2* the best of its series. Not only is it superior to its predecessor, the brutal difficulty level of the first game has been toned down. The game is still no pushover, but its challenge is more likely to cause fun than frustration – which is a good job since the game has eight Robot Masters, up from six in the first game. *Mega Man 2* went on to sales success and established the blue bomber as a star, a richly deserved outcome for one of the best NES games ever.

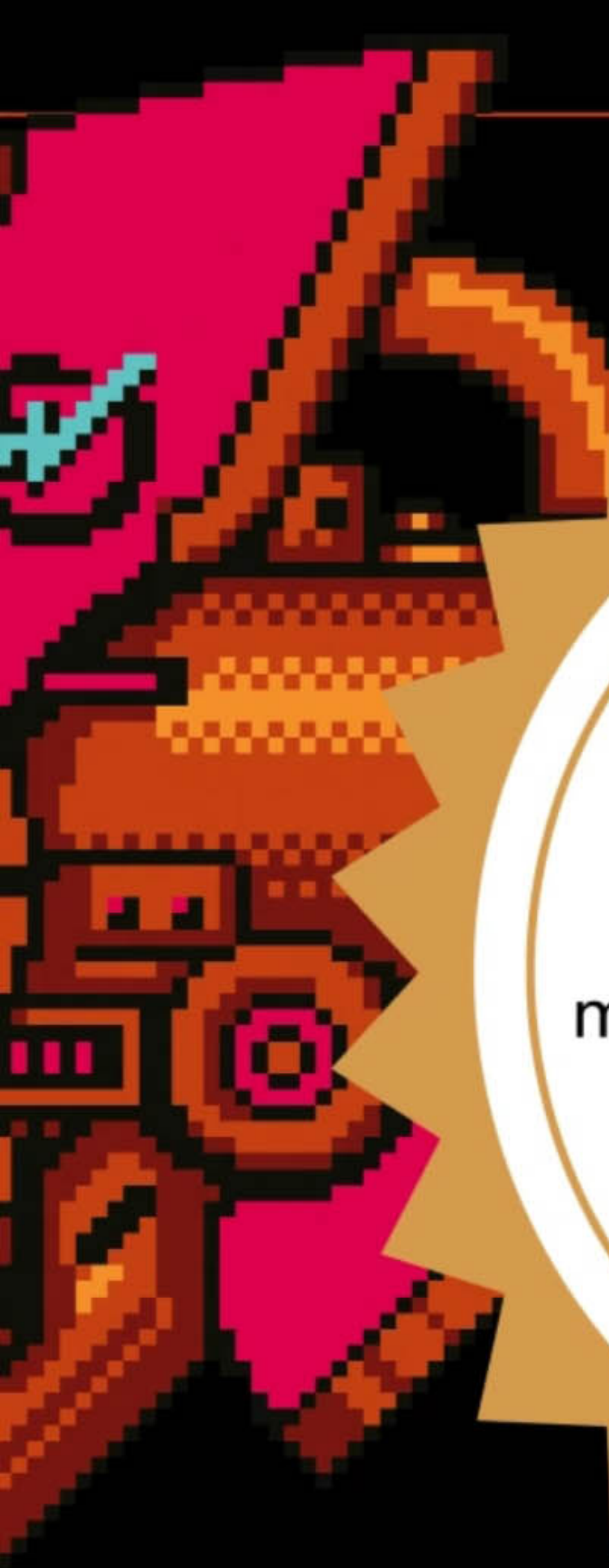


METROID
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
Nintendo
ADVENTURE SERIES
Made in Japan
NES-MT-USA
CONTRA
S. 2
OS./DUCK HUNT

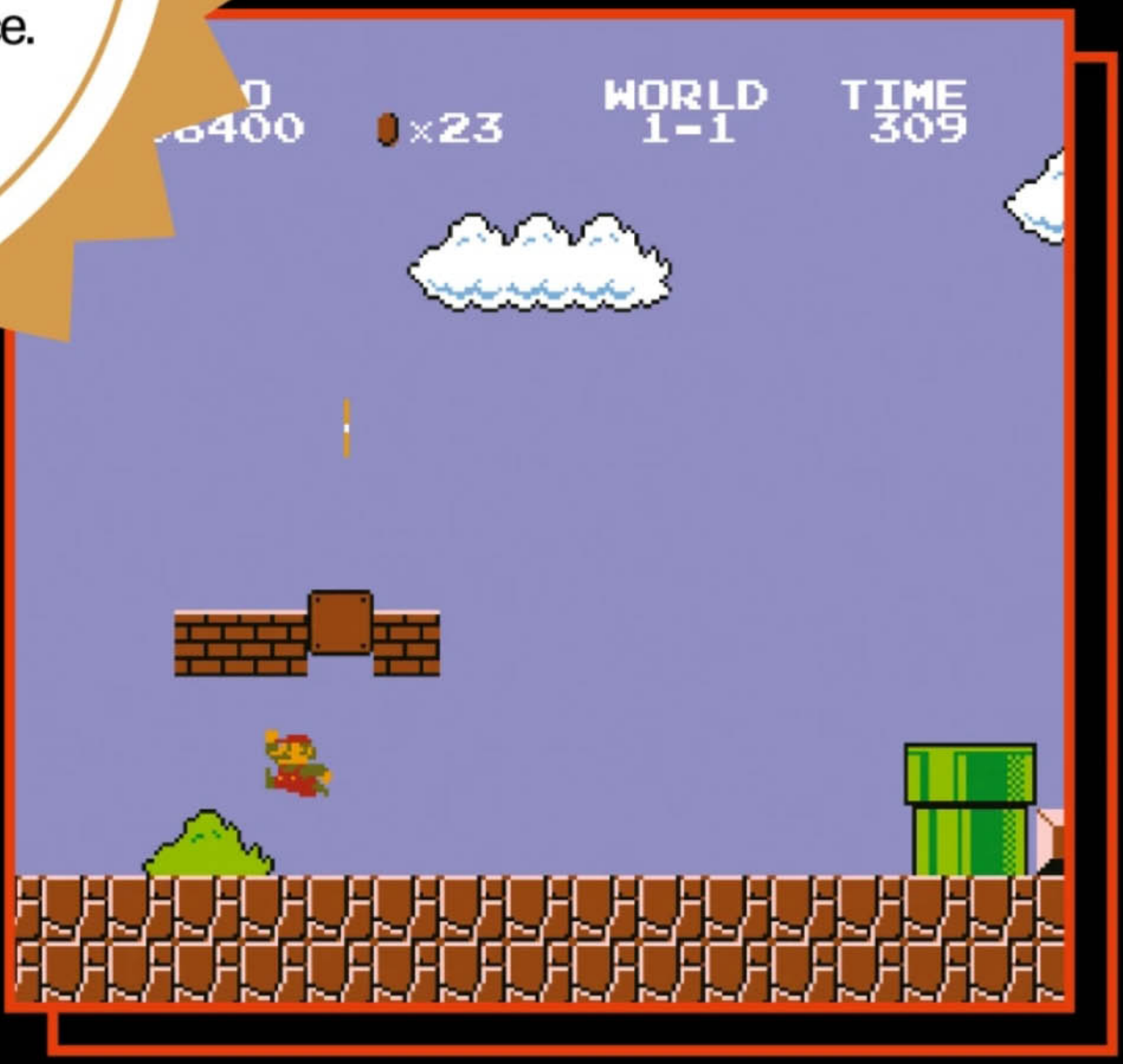
> “Nigh on perfect controls, great weaponry and a very fair difficulty make this the stand out title for the NES.”
>
> ArchaicKoala

> “Anytime I'm feeling frustrated or depressed, or I'm lamenting the industry, all I have to do is load up *Mega Man 2*. I revert to being eight again, and I can't help but be happy, and smile.”
>
> Jaime Griesemer, ex-Bungie, Halo 3 lead designer





> “The godfather of platform games – the game that spawned one million imitations. Nintendo have been the most influential game developer of all time setting so many trends and such a high quality bar that we can easily forget the magnitude of their importance.”
>
> Jon Hare, Sensible Software



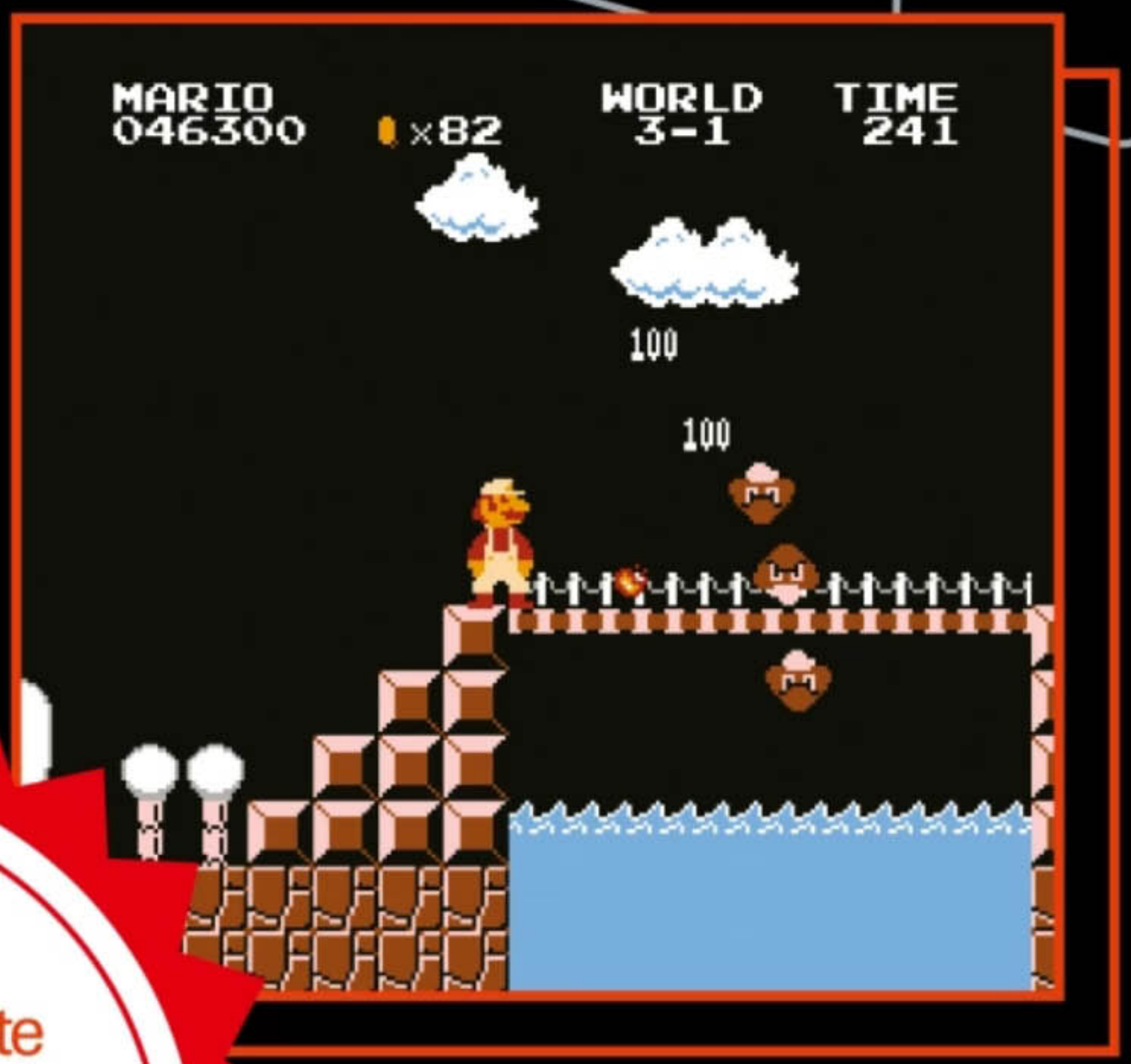
SUPER MARIO BROS.

■ **DEVELOPER:** Nintendo R&D4 ■ **YEAR:** 1985 ■ **GENRE:** Platform

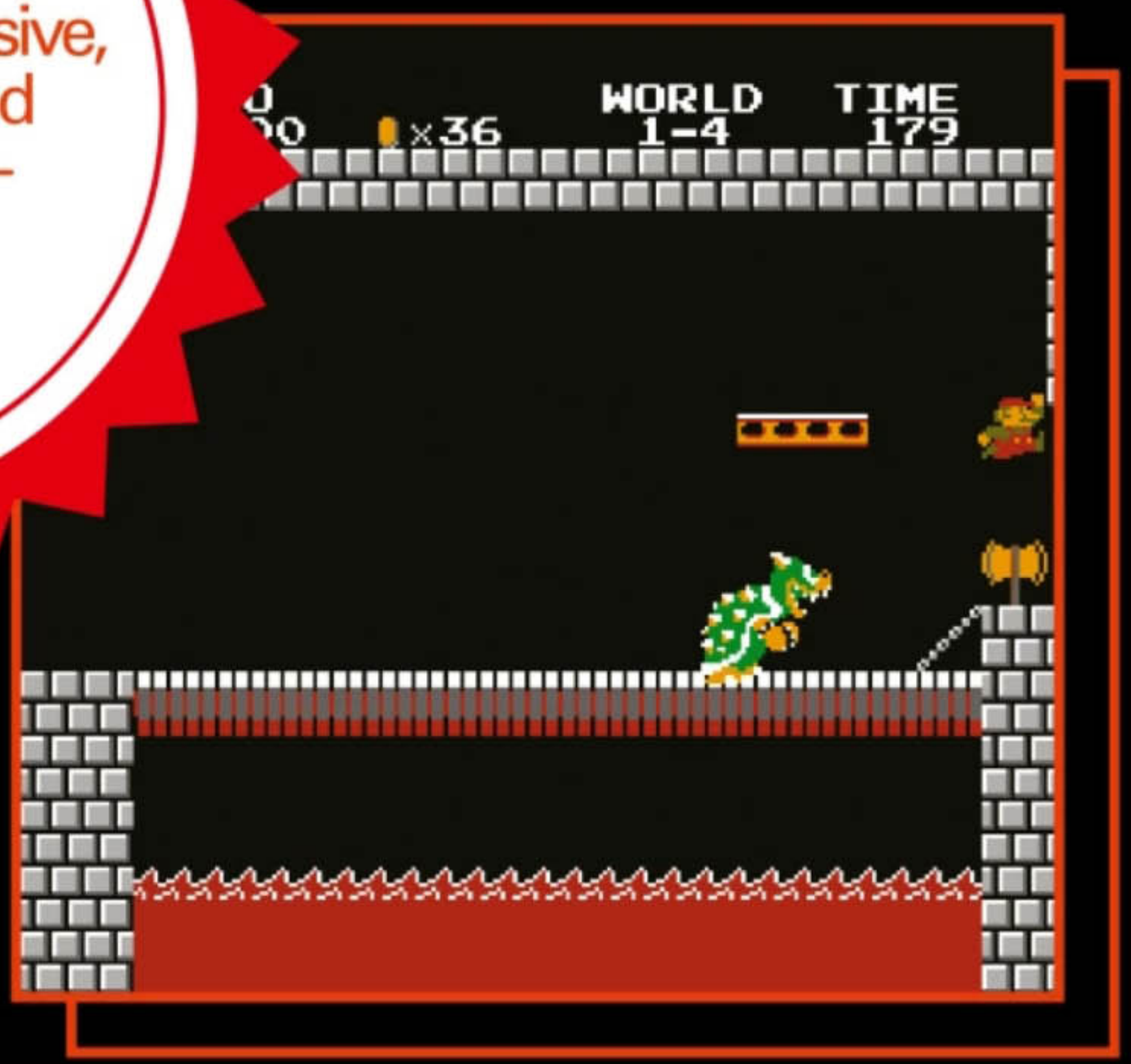
2 **We miss the** days of pack-in games. During the Eighties and Nineties, console manufacturers often seemed to make a special effort to ensure that every buyer would have at least one excellent game to play – and *Super Mario Bros.* was most definitely an excellent game. While Mario had made his debut in *Donkey Kong* and become a headline name in *Mario Bros.*, it wasn’t until *Super Mario Bros.* that he became a real star. Whether it was alone or combined with *Duck Hunt*, *Super Mario Bros.*’ long-term status as a pack-in game meant that over 40 million gamers would get to experience this star-making game.

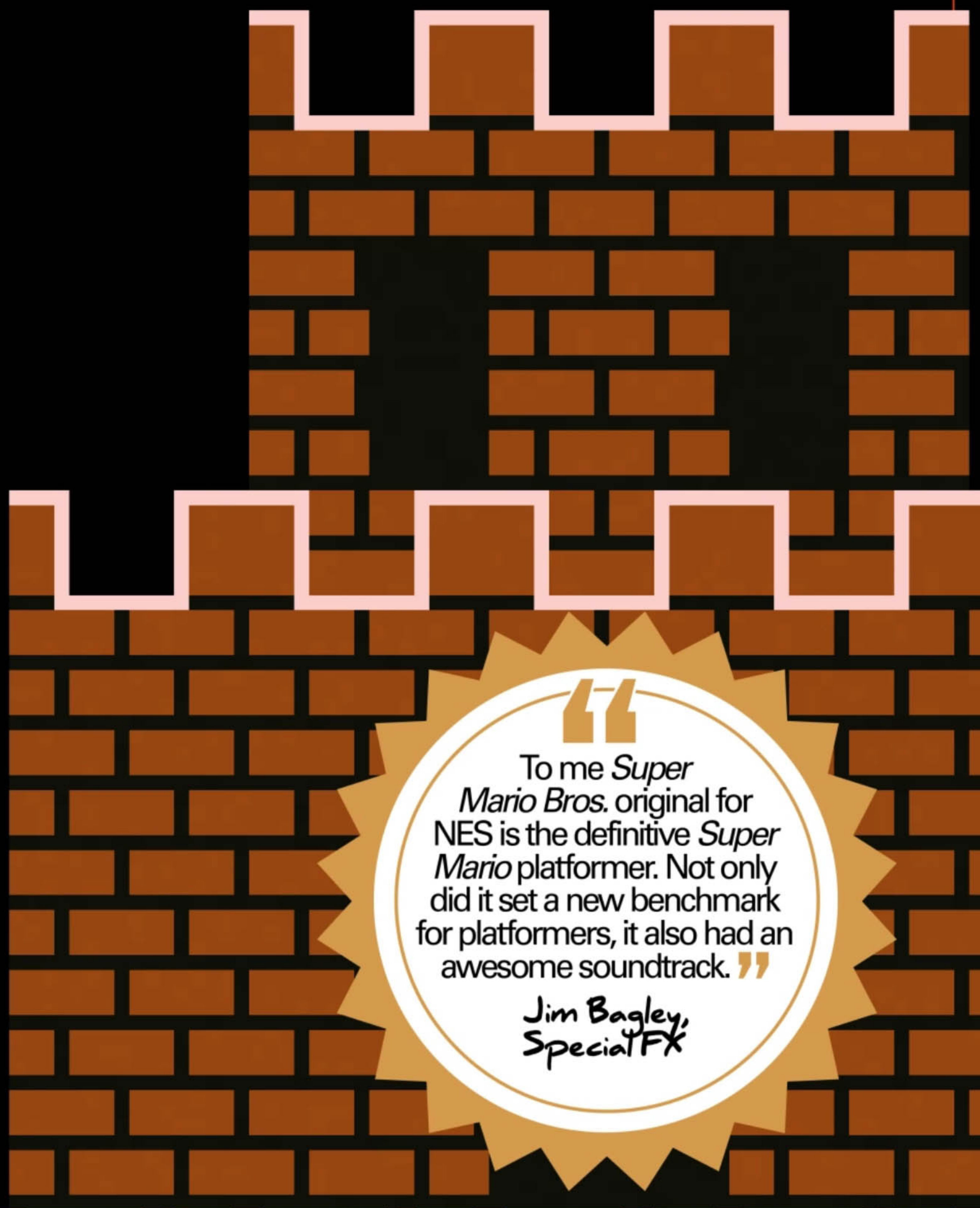
One of the key secrets of *Super Mario Bros.*’ success is that the game explains itself very well through level design alone. The initial screens are a masterpiece of game design, as you’re wordlessly taught the function of enemies, mushrooms and question blocks. As the first game that many players experienced on a new system – and as the NES introduced so many players to videogames – this ease of learning was absolutely vital.

The learning curve also disguised that *Super Mario Bros.* was a complex game for its time, splicing many disparate elements of game design. We’d seen sections that allowed you to skip ahead in *Pitfall!*, power-ups in *Pac-Man* and bosses in *Phoenix*, but all of these combined in *Super Mario Bros.* to make an adventure of a kind never seen before. The variety was aided by the secrets that the game offered, from hidden items to warp zones, and difficulty was perfectly pitched to ensure while *Super Mario Bros.* posed enough challenge to last, but was no ordeal. Games that complement consoles this well are exceedingly rare.



> “The original and still a complete classic. Fast, responsive, superbly designed and endlessly re-playable.”
>
> nakamura



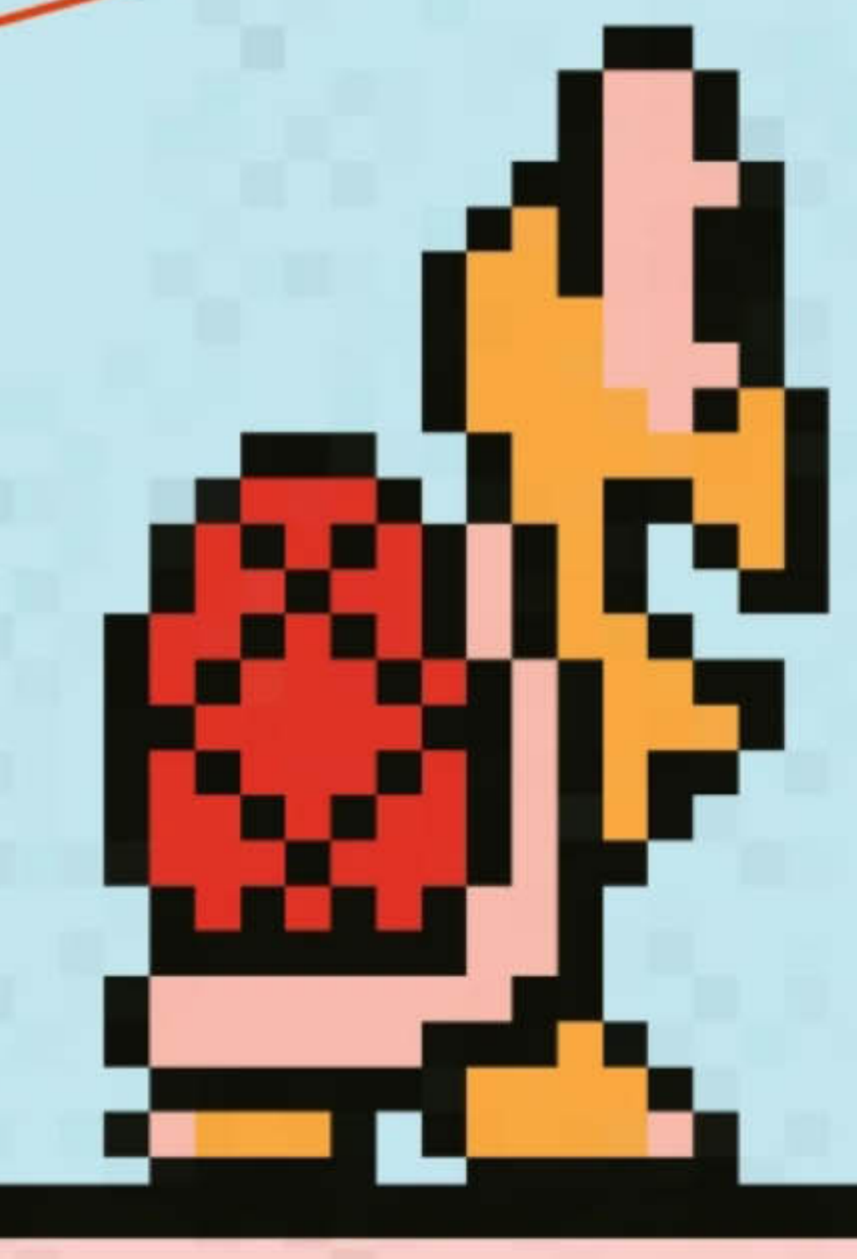


> “To me *Super Mario Bros.* original for NES is the definitive *Super Mario* platformer. Not only did it set a new benchmark for platformers, it also had an awesome soundtrack.”
>
> Jim Bagley, SpecialFX

retro GAMER READERS' CHOICE

“Seriously, this has to be the most impressive game to ever fit on a cartridge. There’s so much gameplay, so much challenge packed into this cartridge… I can’t tell you how addicting it was. I did finish the game and what a tour de force it was back in 1990. This game’s inspiration is what started Id Software – we replicated the first level as a test and sent it to Nintendo!”

John Romero, id Software



“An astounding sequel – so much so that the later games have to be considered evolutionary after this revolutionary leap.”

ArchaicKoala

5 reasons why it’s great

1 Items like the Super Leaf gave Mario new abilities such as flight, enabling new level designs.

2 It offers a huge amount of content, with dozens of stages for players to tackle and master.

3 Even the level selection screen exudes character, thanks to its framing as an animated map.

4 If there’s a argument against hopping around in a shoe, we have never heard it.

5 It perfected the *Mario* model, providing the template for every 2D *Mario* adventure since.

“Remains for me the pinnacle of 2D platform gaming. Imaginative, infuriating, wonderful, frustrating, joyful, tearful and ultimately entirely rewarding and magical. I kept the NES on for a week to prevent loss of progress.”

Gregg Mayles, Rare

SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

DEVELOPER: Nintendo R&D4 **YEAR:** 1988 **GENRE:** Platform

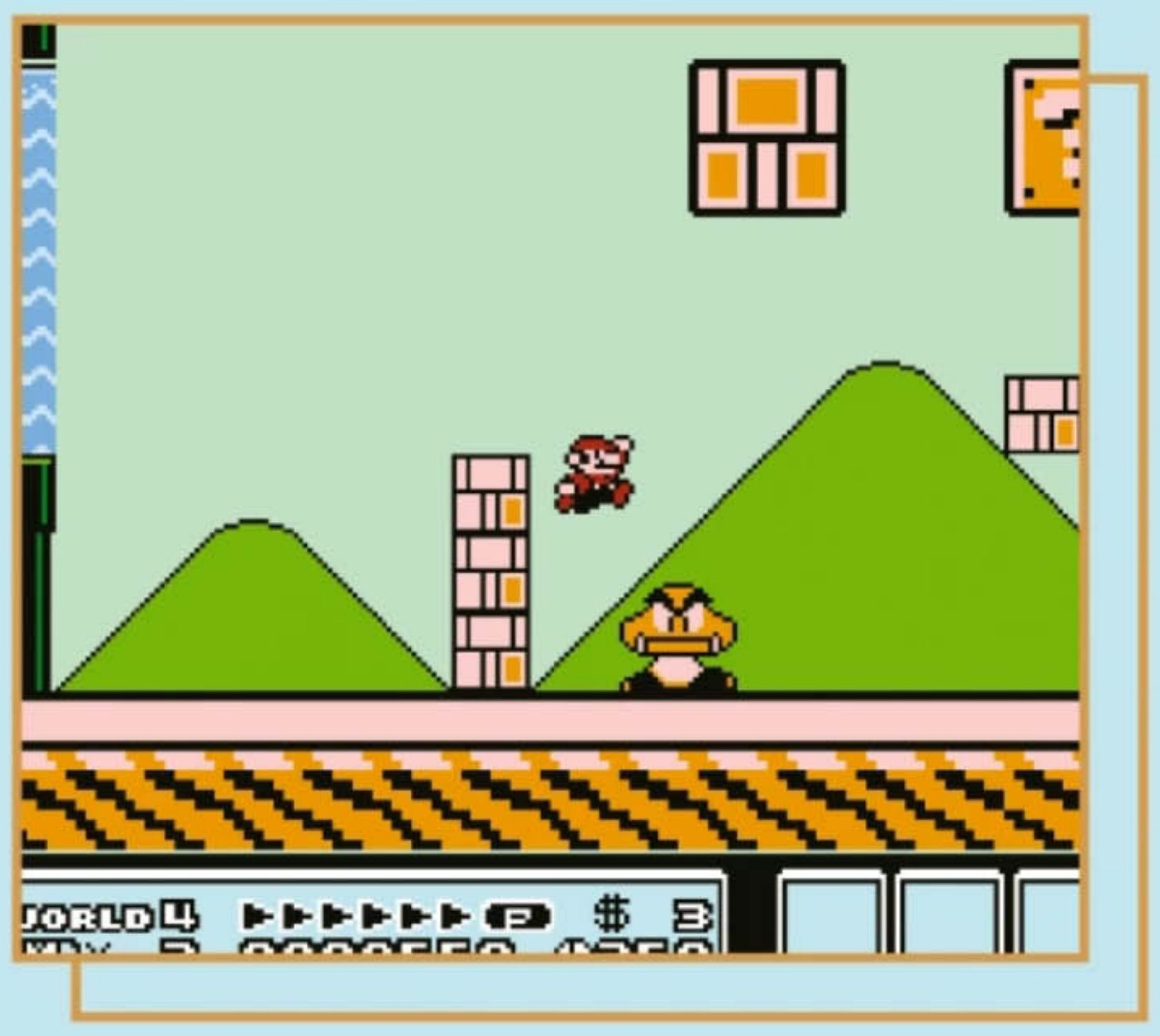
1 **For Nintendo R&D4,** developing *Super Mario Bros. 3* must have been a tough task. It would have been absurd to expect the development team to take an already-beloved classic and improve upon it in every single aspect. It is to the credit of Shigeru Miyamoto and his team that they didn't just attempt it, but managed to succeed in doing so.

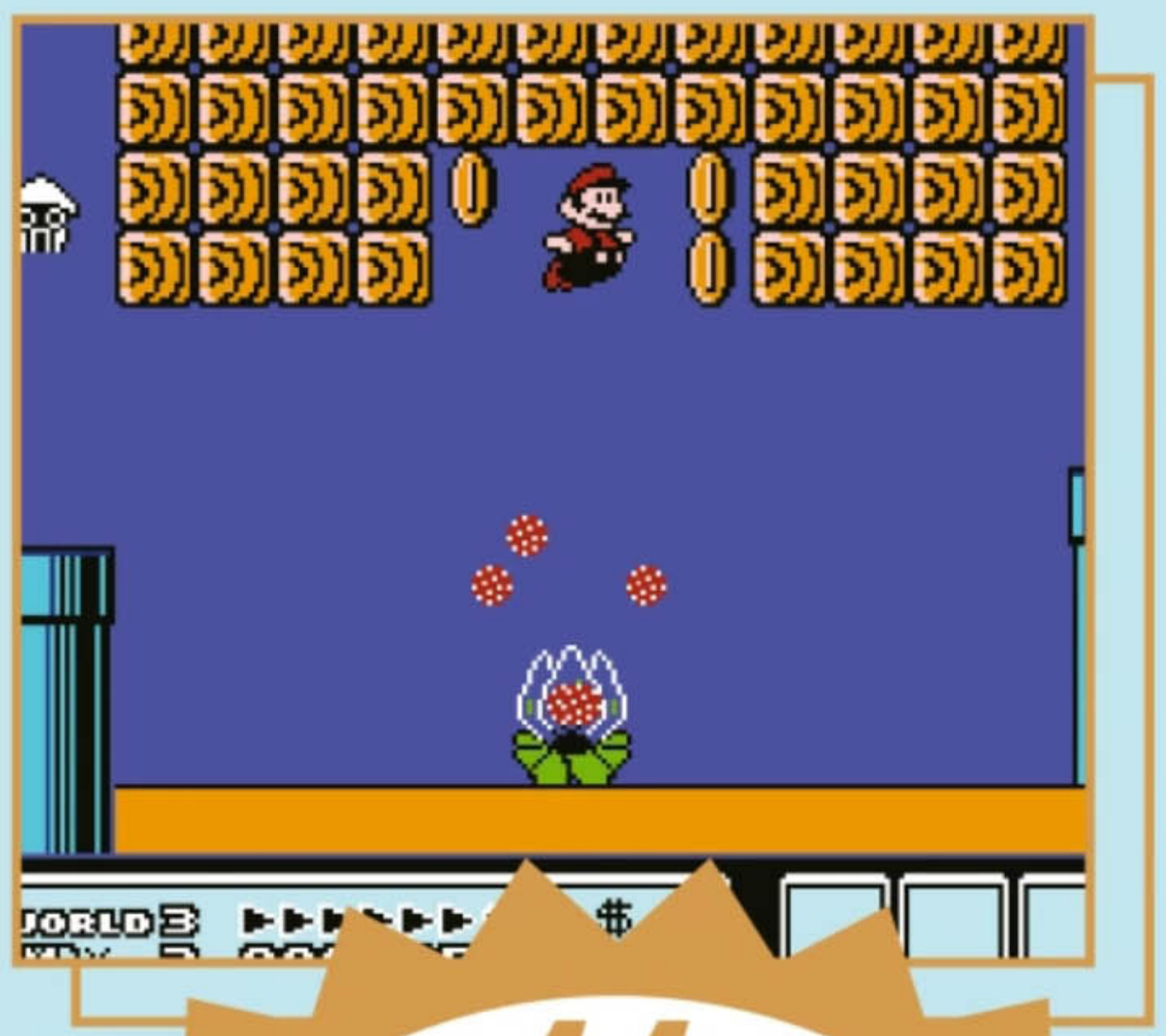
The Japanese version of *Super Mario Bros. 2* (known internationally as *The Lost Levels*) had been a very small upgrade over its predecessor, with slightly improved visuals and a few new hazards (such as the Poision Mushroom), and primarily offered more challenging stages for players that had mastered the original game. Contrast this with *Super Mario Bros. 3*, which offered all-new visuals, new music with additional sound effects, a variety of new enemy types, new power-ups, new blocks – if you could name something in the original *Super Mario Bros.*, Nintendo had managed to identify and implement a fantastic new spin on it in their new game.

These new elements allowed for some incredibly clever level designs too, from the floating platform challenge of stage 1-4 to the complex cannon arrangements of the airship levels. Many stages take new mechanics, implement them in every way you can think of, and then add a few you had missed just for good measure. Even something as simple as the introduction of sloped surfaces allowed for a new move and new opportunities for fun, as Mario could slide downhill on his backside and take out enemies with his momentum alone. What is truly amazing is that the high quality, inventive level designs are so consistent, given how numerous they are – the game's eight worlds feature an astonishing 90 stages.

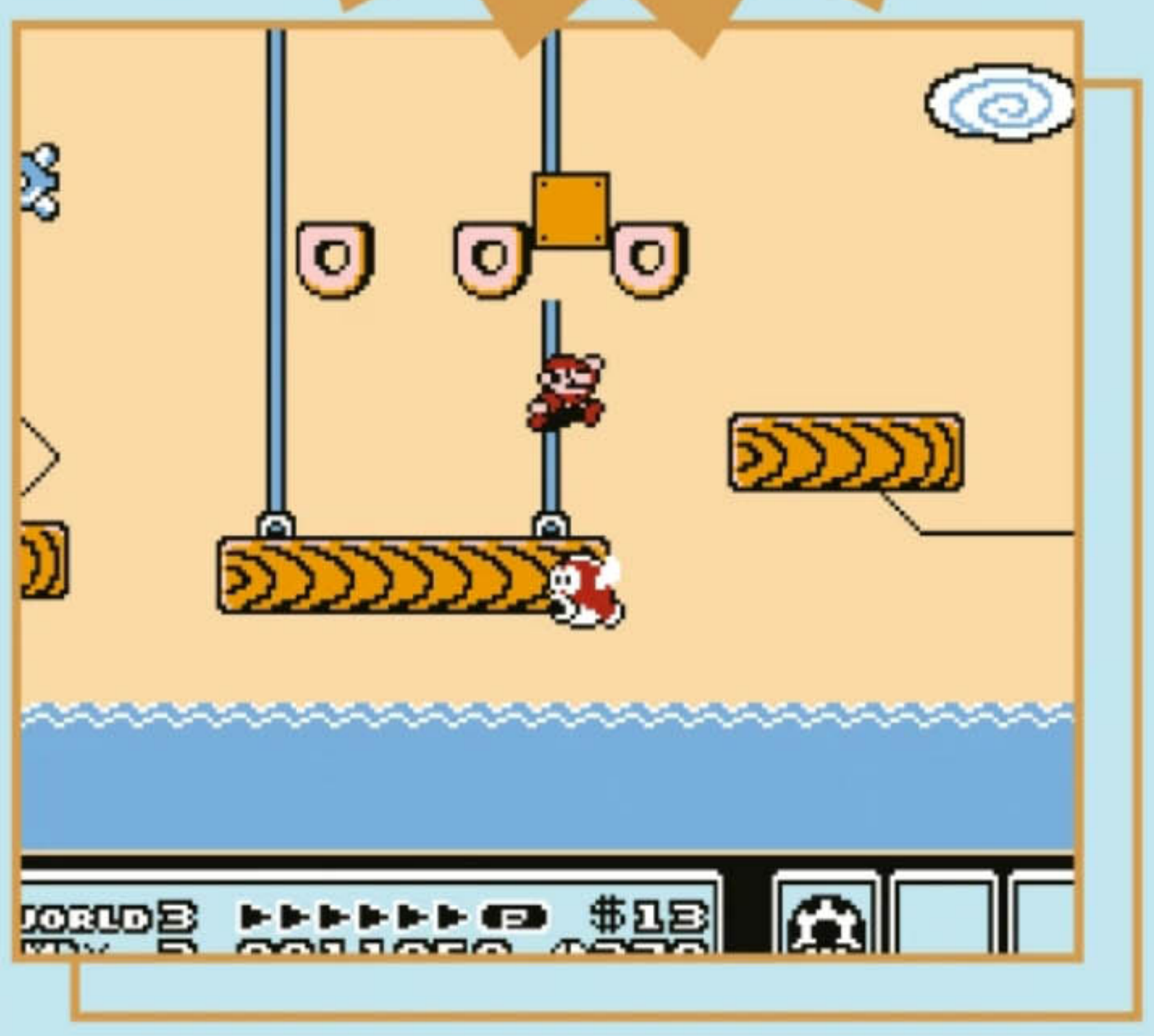
With the American audience whipped into fever pitch by pre-release footage in the movie *The Wizard*, *Super Mario Bros. 3* was always going to do well. Even so, the game was an unprecedented commercial success, becoming the best-selling non-bundled NES game – and along with its predecessor, one of only two such games to exceed the 10 million mark. The game has been ported and remade often and continues to perform remarkably, selling over 3 million copies when remade for the Game Boy Advance, and another million as a Virtual Console game on the Wii.

Super Mario Bros. 3 is a game that contains just about everything that a fan of platform games could want. If you want a game with tight, responsive control, that's covered. If you want variety, the game offers dozens of levels, many enemies and an array of interesting power-ups. If you want clean, attractive visuals and timeless tunes, this classic beast of a game has them. If there is such a thing as a perfect videogame, *Super Mario Bros. 3* is the closest that the NES ever got to delivering it.





> "In 1991 as a birthday treat my Dad took me to the World Of Commodore show and offered to buy anything I wanted. We left empty handed and instead bought *Super Mario Bros. 3.*"
>
> Steve Lycett, Sumo Digital



EXCITEBIKE

BIKES… THAT EXCITE

EXCITEBIKE
SELECTION A
SELECTION B
DESIGN
©1984 NINTENDO

- **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- **RELEASED:** 1984
- **GENRE:** RACER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+, 500 POINTS FOR WII VERSION

HISTORY

You've got to hand it to Shigeru Miyamoto, he certainly knows how to make great games. Take the brilliant *Excitebike* for example. It doesn't look too special with its just about functional backgrounds, teeny weeny (yet rather cute) motorbike sprites and the sort of sound effects that will cause your ears to shut down in protest, but if you look deeper you'll find that beneath the rudimentary aesthetics lies that typical Midas, sorry, Miyamoto touch.

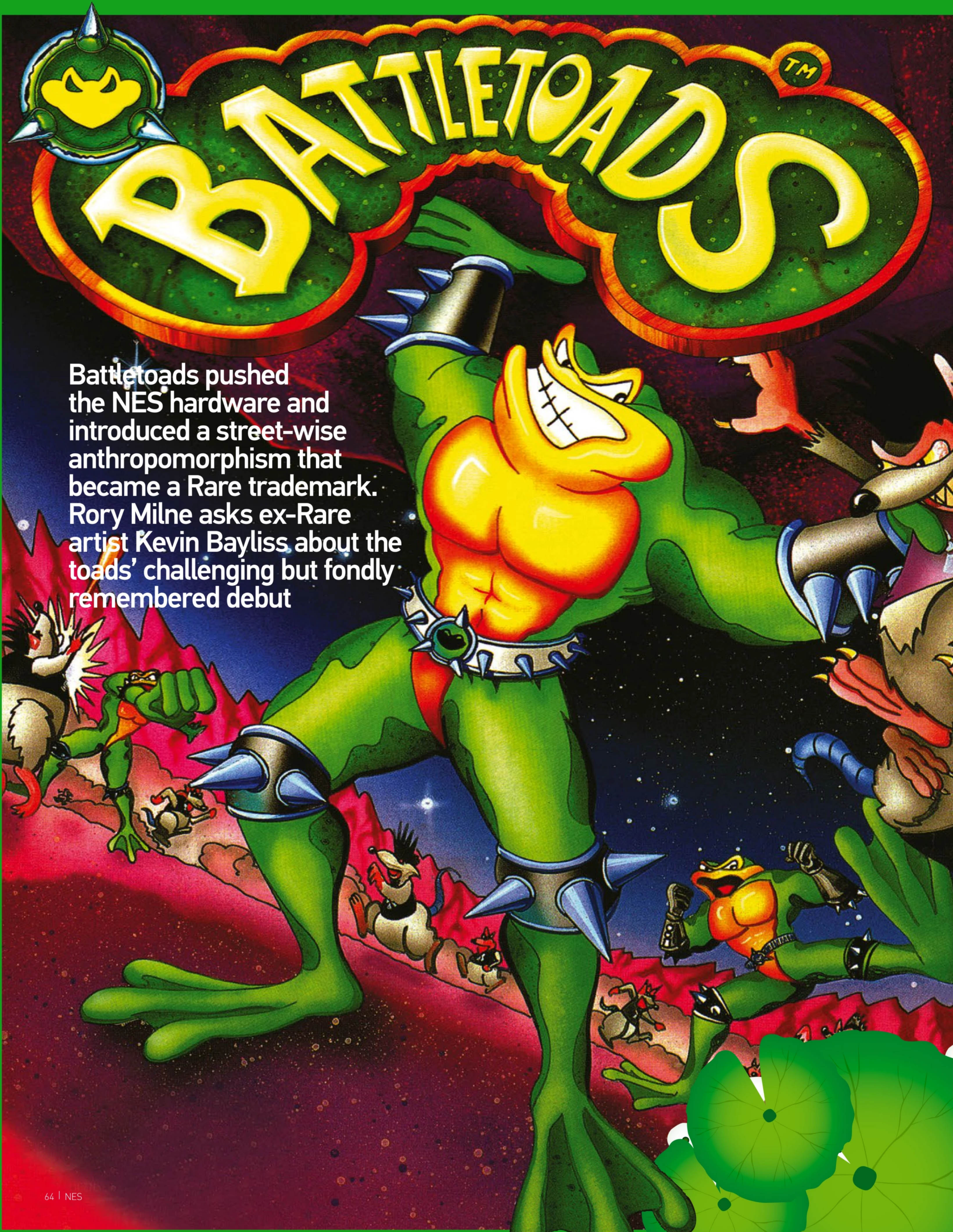
A simple time attack trial at its pulsing heart, *Excitebike* requires you to do nothing more then race through a selection of cleverly designed courses as quickly as possible. Sure, you'll have to occasionally keep an eye on your temperature gauge to make sure your bike doesn't overheat, but that's about as complicated as *Excitebike* gets.

While the single-player time trials are pretty good fun – 21 years on and I'm still returning to them thanks to the recent Virtual Console release – it's racing against the three computer opponents that really helps to elevate Nintendo's racer above similar games of the time. Beautifully paced, your three competitors are initially fairly easy to beat, but as the levels progress you have a real fight on your hands if you want to walk away with first place.

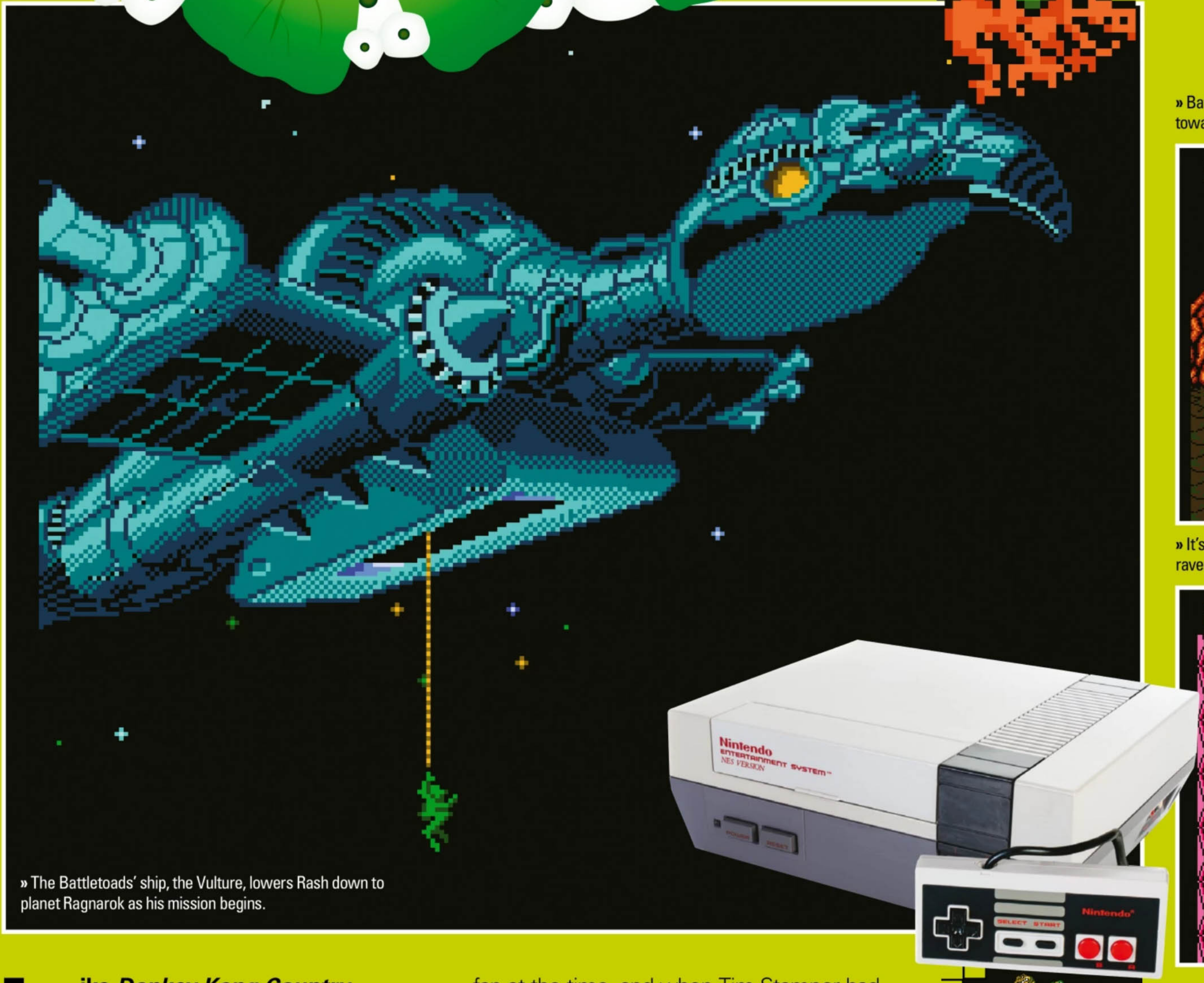
When you've finally exhausted the single-player time trials, and have become bored with constantly beating the computer's AI, *Excitebike* has one more trick up its sleeve – a sublime edit mode. While you'll initially spend all your time devising the sort of devious ramps and jumps that even Evil Knievel would think long and hard about jumping across, you'll soon take it all seriously and begin to create courses that really test your mettle. And that's the beauty of *Excitebike* – the more put into Nintendo's superb little racer, the more you'll continue to get out of it. And if that's not the quality of a good game then I don't know what is.

NINTENDO

BATTLETOADS

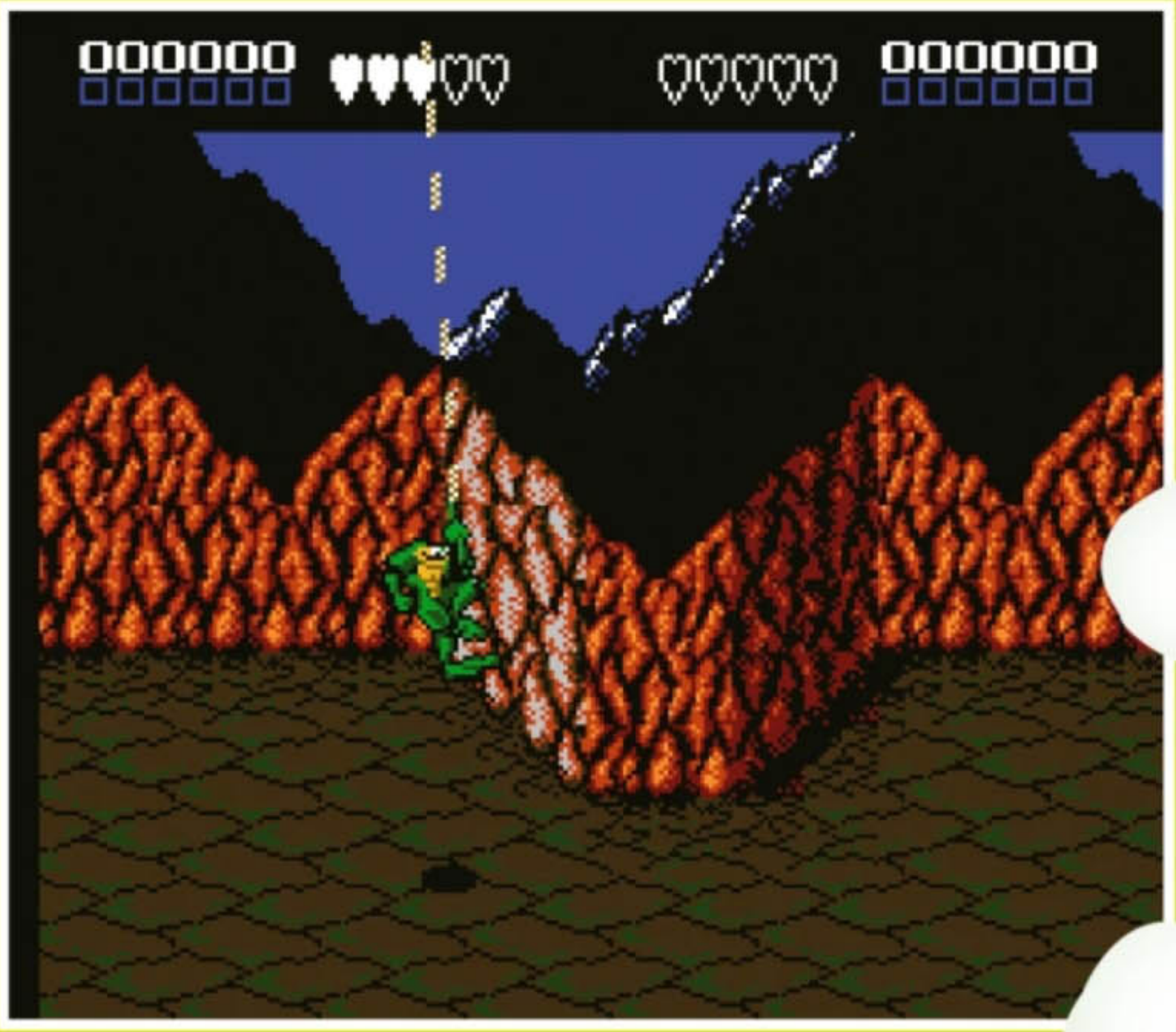


Battletoads pushed the NES hardware and introduced a street-wise anthropomorphism that became a Rare trademark. Rory Milne asks ex-Rare artist Kevin Bayliss about the toads' challenging but fondly remembered debut

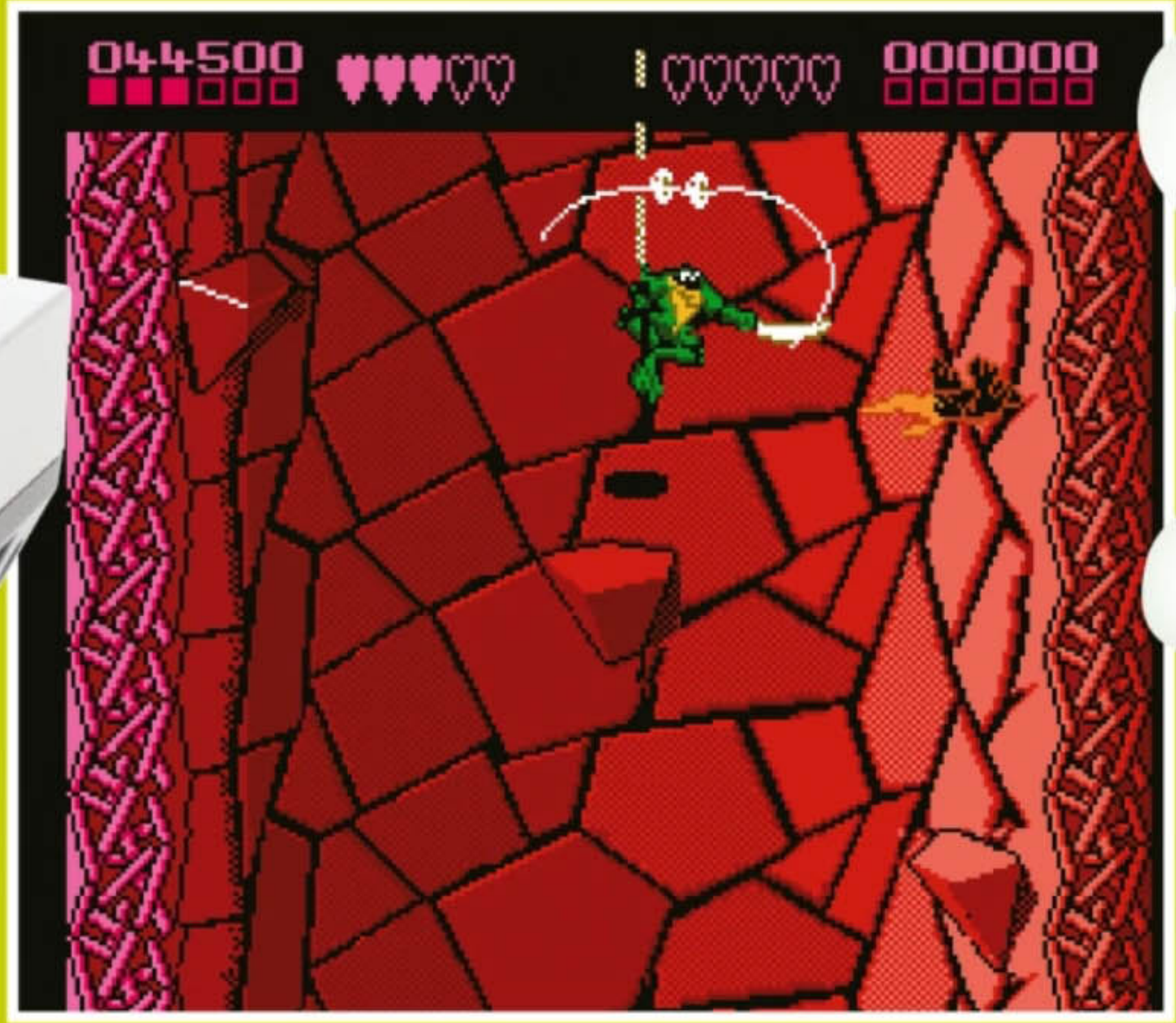


» The Battletoads' ship, the Vulture, lowers Rash down to planet Ragnarok as his mission begins.

» Battletoad Rash swings into action as he descends towards the Dark Queen's planet.



» It's "Bye, Bye, Blackbird!" as toad trumps raven in a sheer vertical drop.



Like *Donkey Kong Country*, *Battletoads* marked a pivotal point in Rare's journey. In the same way that *DKC* was Rare's last hurrah for the SNES – although not its last SNES title – *Battletoads* was Rare's swansong of sorts for the NES – although not its final NES effort. Both games were, though, the culmination of everything that Rare learned about the intimate workings of Nintendo's earliest consoles. And while Rare's later SNES and NES games innovated in terms of gameplay, they had little scope to improve technically on their iconic predecessors or, indeed, to squeeze more into their carts.

"Yeah, it was really *full*, if you know what I mean," agrees Kevin Bayliss, *Battletoads*' co-designer, "there wasn't a lot more we could cram in. We were constantly measuring the size of the code and graphics to ensure that it would fit on the cartridge that we had aimed it to be released on. *Battletoads* was really rammed in there!"

Of course, long before getting the game to fit its cartridge, concepts and characters would have to be developed, which was an aspect of *Battletoads*' design that would be very much influenced by the family-friendly guidelines that Rare worked to at the time. "Sideways scrolling arcade-style games were very popular around the late Eighties and early Nineties," Kevin remembers, "and as Rare had previous experience with that genre with some of the Ultimate titles, we decided to try one for NES. I was a huge *Double Dragon* fan at the time, and when Tim Stamper had okayed the idea of putting together a beat-'em-up style game he asked me to come up with some characters for it. Rare wasn't really known for making violent games, and Nintendo had a policy for limiting violence, ensuring that certain things were portrayed in a certain way. So we took the more fun-styled cartoon approach, rather than the more graphic and serious look of some of the other popular beat-'em-up games of the time. Enter the Battletoads!"

With a genre and direction chosen, Kevin got on with the task of developing the characters that would inhabit the *Battletoads* world ready for Tim to digitise and pass on to the game's coder Mark Betteridge, as Kevin explains. "I was heavily involved in creating the character designs, based on ideas that one of our writers, Guy Miller, was putting together working alongside Tim. I think apart from one or two, the designs of the characters were all drawn by me. I was mainly responsible for concept artwork and a little in-game artwork. I gave Tim sketches each day, and he'd then squeeze my designs into sprites. At that time, we were still tracing sketches on grids, and boxing sprites into as few characters as possible. You can recognise Tim's style when you look at how the toads, enemies and props compare to the Ultimate games. He was very clever at making graphics fit within a certain memory capacity due to his experience with Ultimate; there was an art to it I guess. We thought it would be fun to enlarge the fists upon impact when players hit their opponents. This really seemed to work on the tiny sprite characters, and so we expanded upon that by enhancing their limbs with power-ups, which gave the game a unique look, and it of course also became one of the main features of the characters themselves. Backgrounds were also heavily put together by Tim, as he was far more experienced in putting that kind of stuff together. He worked very closely with Mark Betteridge – the software genius behind a lot of Rare's earlier titles – while I churned out concept work, logos and front-end story graphics."

Having established a production line for *Battletoads*' visual components, the small team could start developing the game's ▶

YEAH! LET'S GET 'EM BACK

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO

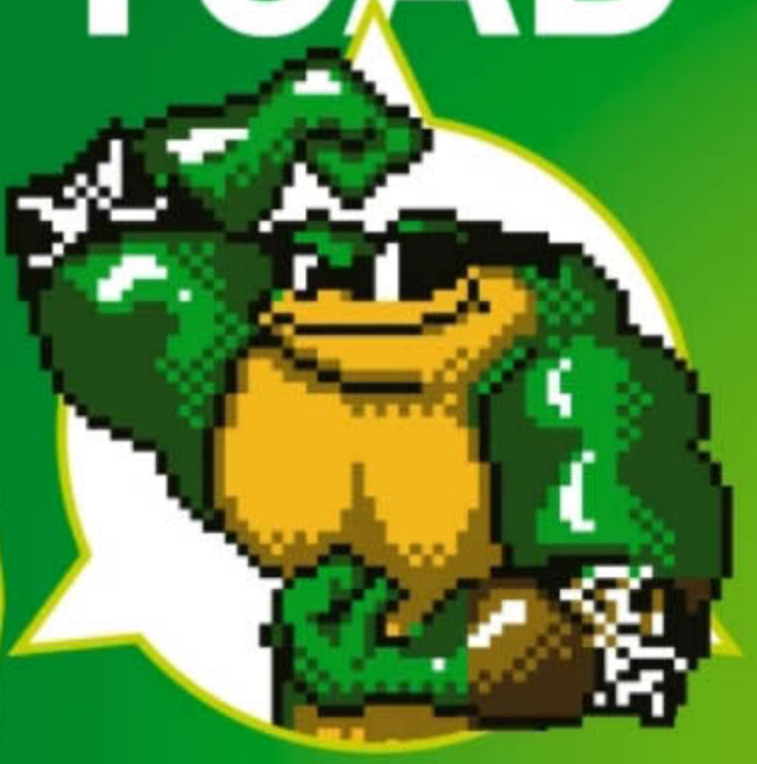
» **DEVELOPER:** RARE

» **RELEASED:** 1991

» **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS

» **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP / PLATFORMER

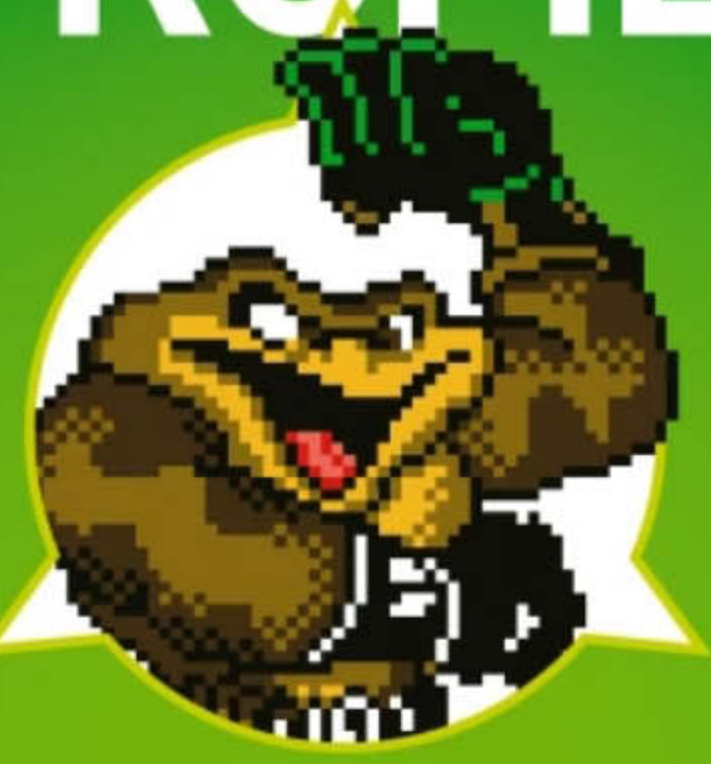
TOAD PROFILES



NAME: Rash

STYLE:
Too cool for school

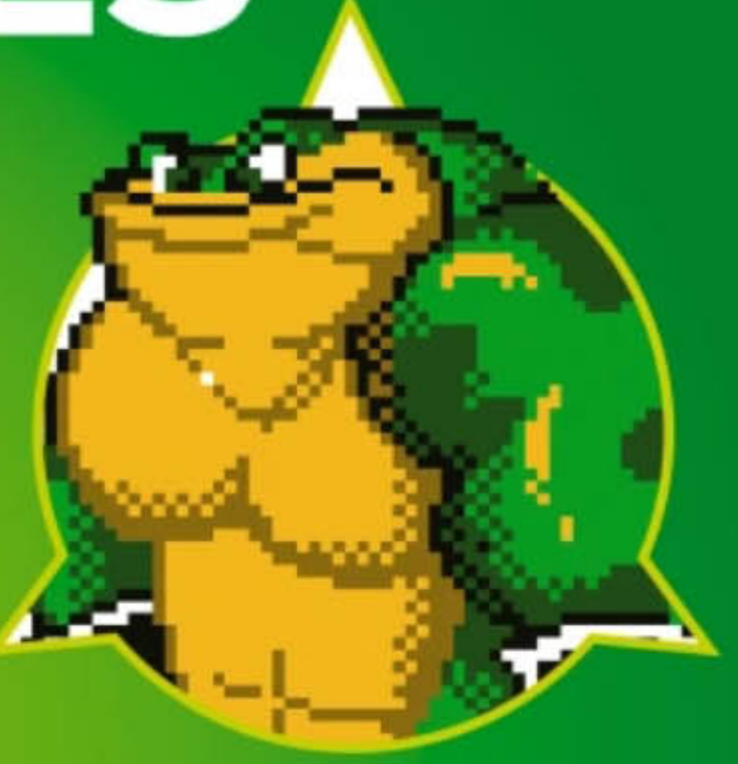
■ A flamboyant extrovert, Rash has fast fighting moves to match his fast mouth. He may be the smallest of the toads, but that helps to make him the most agile.



NAME: Zitz

STYLE:
Brains over brawn

■ Leader of the Battletoads, Zitz is a tactical genius. He isn't as fast as Rash or as tough as Pimple, but he's good with gadgets – think James Bond with warts.



NAME: Pimple

STYLE:
Bull in a china shop

■ He's not the brightest, but Pimple's brute force comes in handy when the toads go into battle. Plus, he's dating a Princess, so he must be doing something right.

BATTLETOADS HISTORY

A quick overview of the series. How many have you played?

BATTLETOADS

NES 1991

■ It all began on the NES, of course, but the brawling, platforming and multi-genre stages of the Battletoads' first demanding outing were ported to various other consoles as well as the Amiga.

BATTLETOADS

GAME BOY 1991

■ Although released just after the NES original, Game Boy *Battletoads* was pretty much a completely different game. A few NES stages survived in adapted form, but the title essentially went its own way.

BATTLETOADS & DOUBLE DRAGON: THE ULTIMATE TEAM GAME BOY 1993

■ The Battletoads teamed up with the characters that inspired their creation for this sequel, and while it spanned several genres – much as its predecessor had done – the follow-up offered a few more sustained beat-'em-up sequences.

010435
RASH

BATTLETOADS IN BATTLEMANIACS

SNES 1993

■ Although an original game, *Battlemaniacs* was heavily inspired by aspects of the first *Battletoads* title. Its visuals, plot and bosses were new, however, and its gameplay was reworked to show off the Super Nintendo hardware.

BATTLETOADS IN RAGNAROK'S WORLD GAME BOY 1993

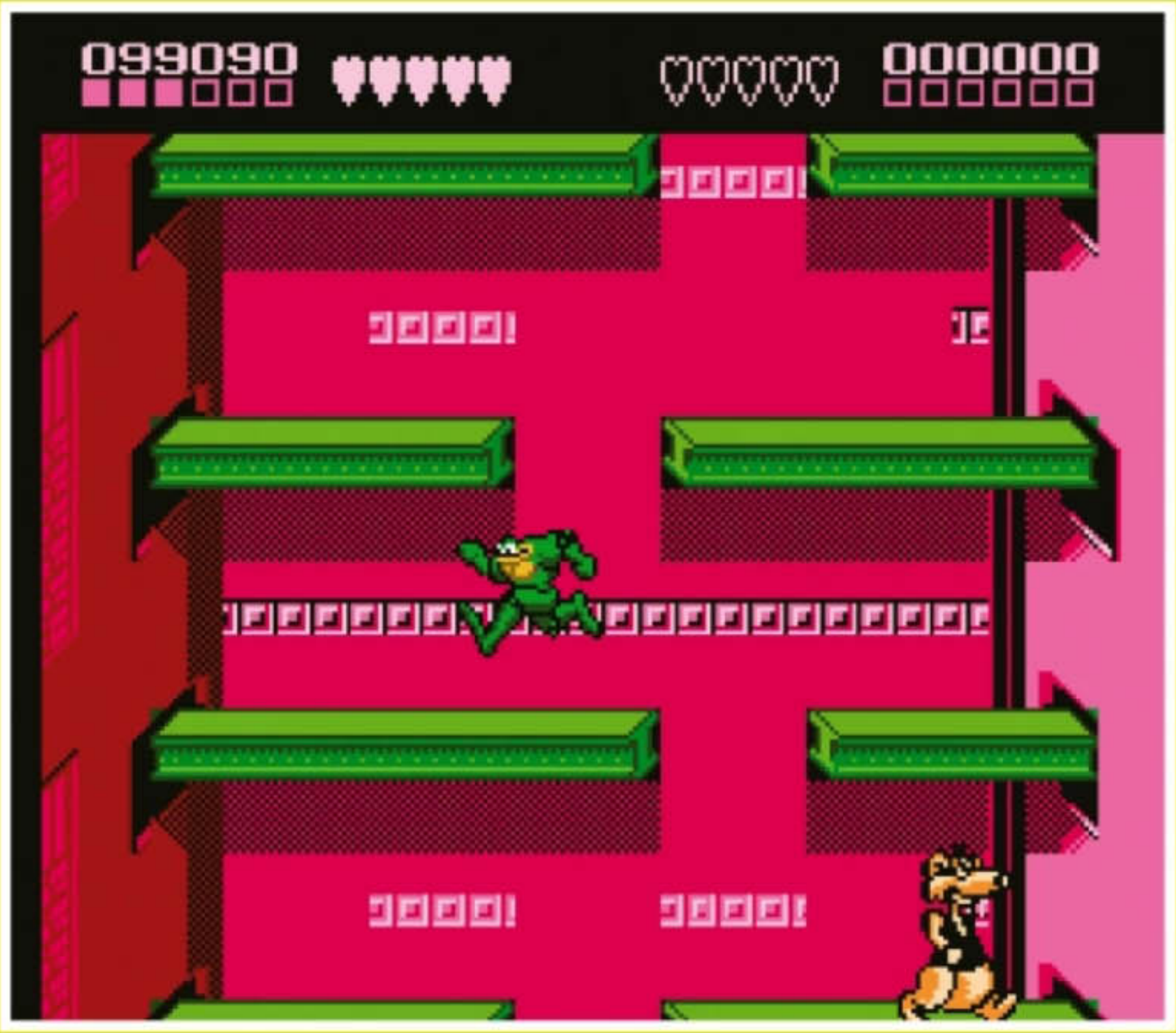
■ Confusingly, this impressive system exclusive delivered exactly what might have been expected of Game Boy *Battletoads* – a stripped down version of the NES original with graphical concessions and fewer levels and bosses.

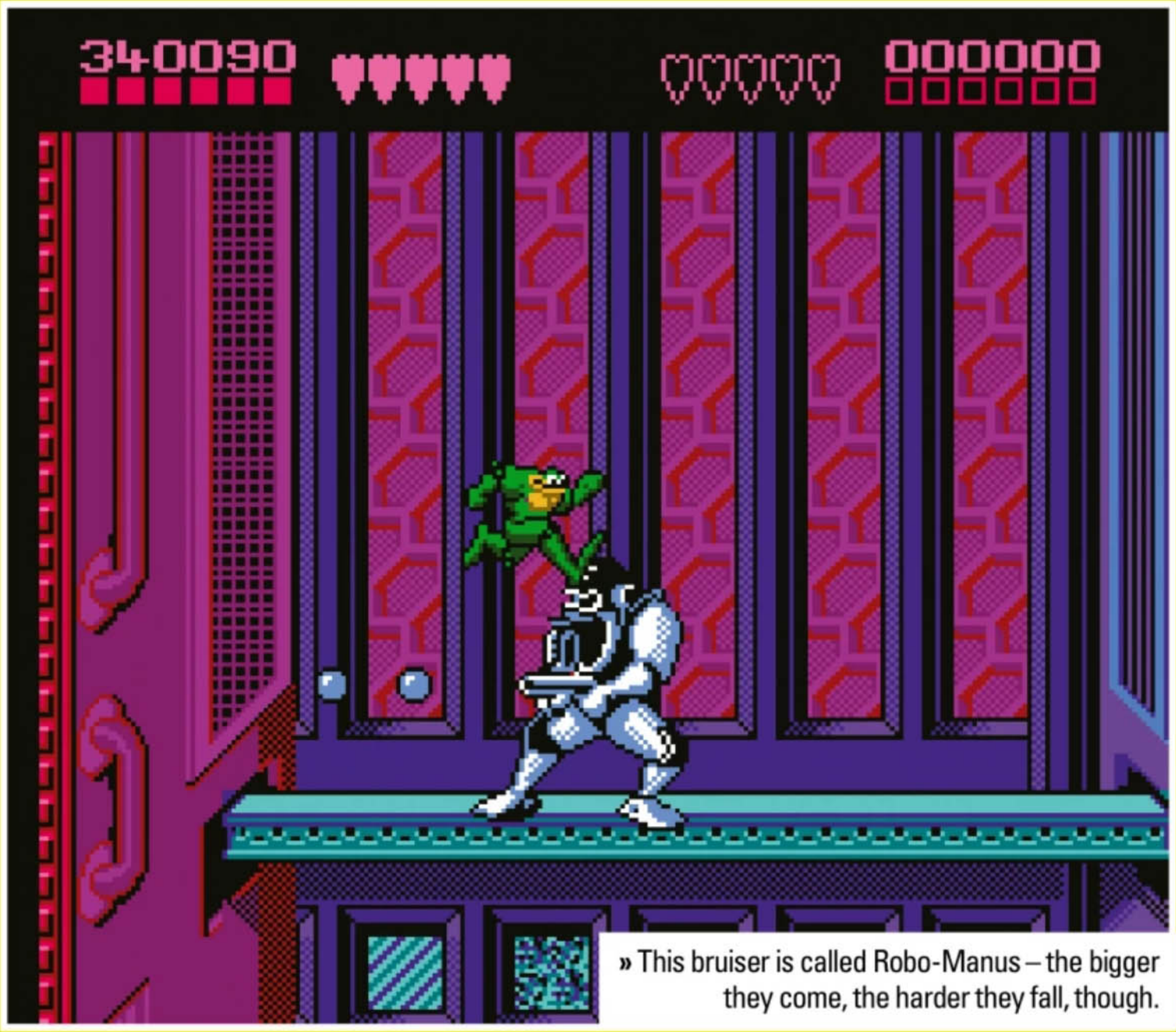
BATTLETOADS

ARCADE 1994

■ *Battletoads* undeservedly flopped at the arcades, despite being a high-quality scrolling fighter that refined the franchise's formula. The coin-op is predictably the best-looking *Battletoads* title released and favours brawling over other genres.

» An actual rat race, as Rash races a ratty opponent to defuse a bomb.





» This bruiser is called Robo-Manus – the bigger they come, the harder they fall, though.

▶ design and storyline. "We all worked together on that team on a day-to-day basis," Kevin recalls, "but when it came to the game design and concepts for levels, that was really Tim and Mark. The game design was the first thing that was tried and tested. Story came afterwards. But once we had the first few levels rolling along and playing nicely, we continued to expand upon the story too. This story then gave us other ideas to work into the game, so we were soon developing the story and the game simultaneously."

The structure the team had put in place allowed the *Battletoads* project to quickly gain momentum, and a game-defining decision was soon made on the title's difficulty. "Mark had developed some editors for creating levels, and I think that Tim worked with him on putting those together," notes Kevin, "I remember that a lot of work went into making it seriously hard and precise. Some of it was crazy hard but that's the way it was intended to be; extremely challenging. I would often hear Mark scream when he was testing his own software if he failed to get past his own levels, but I don't think he made it *too* hard. I guess we just wanted value for money, and for the game to last. We'd always try to vary the levels so that you got a break from one particular style or genre within the game. It made it more refreshing to play over periods of time and a lot more challenging in general. The story would often help to play a part in creating those subgenres and added to the variation. I remember watching Tim draw all of the sections of the Dark Queen's tower, which Mark cleverly animated to achieve the 3D effect. It worked really well, and I learned a lot of tricks from Tim by watching him create those kinds of effects. I thought it looked amazing when I saw it working."

As *Battletoads*' visuals, design and gameplay evolved, another equally important aspect of the game was addressed – one that required an additional team member, as Kevin recollects. "My friend Dave Wise would come up with new music for each level – as far as I remember, that was pretty much the way it went for most games. The levels didn't really come to life until we had music and effects. I remember always looking forward to Dave appearing with a new disc that held the music to the next level. Once that was incorporated we'd sometimes switch the odd level music around to a different level, because sometimes tunes felt *right* on other levels. But usually, Dave would go away after looking at a level's graphics and a brief demo of the gameplay, and then he'd write a piece for the level. A lot of the sound effects were created by Mark – using some software he created to generate sounds."

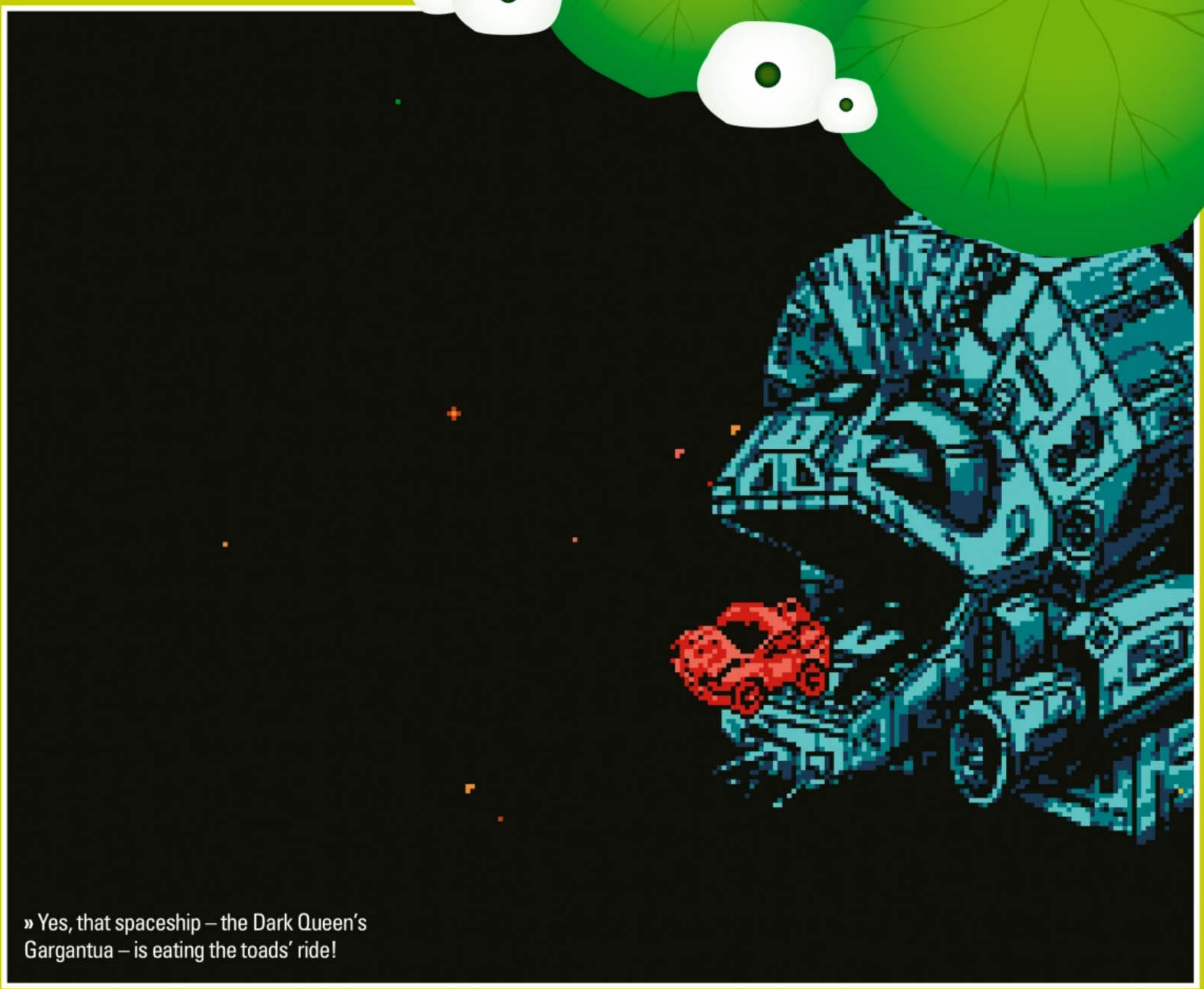
Serious hours were being put in to *Battletoads* and the team's collective efforts were reaching fruition, and so work was started on the title's box art, but thought was also being given to documenting the game's visuals for future reference and to help with the marketing of the game. "I designed the box artwork, but Tim airbrushed and produced it." Kevin reveals, "It was the second design. I did one with the three toads on the front up-close, but it went off to focus groups and it didn't grab the kids' attention, so we did a redesign. I inked up a picture, and as Tim was so good

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1994

GOLDENEYE 007
SYSTEM: N64
YEAR: 1997

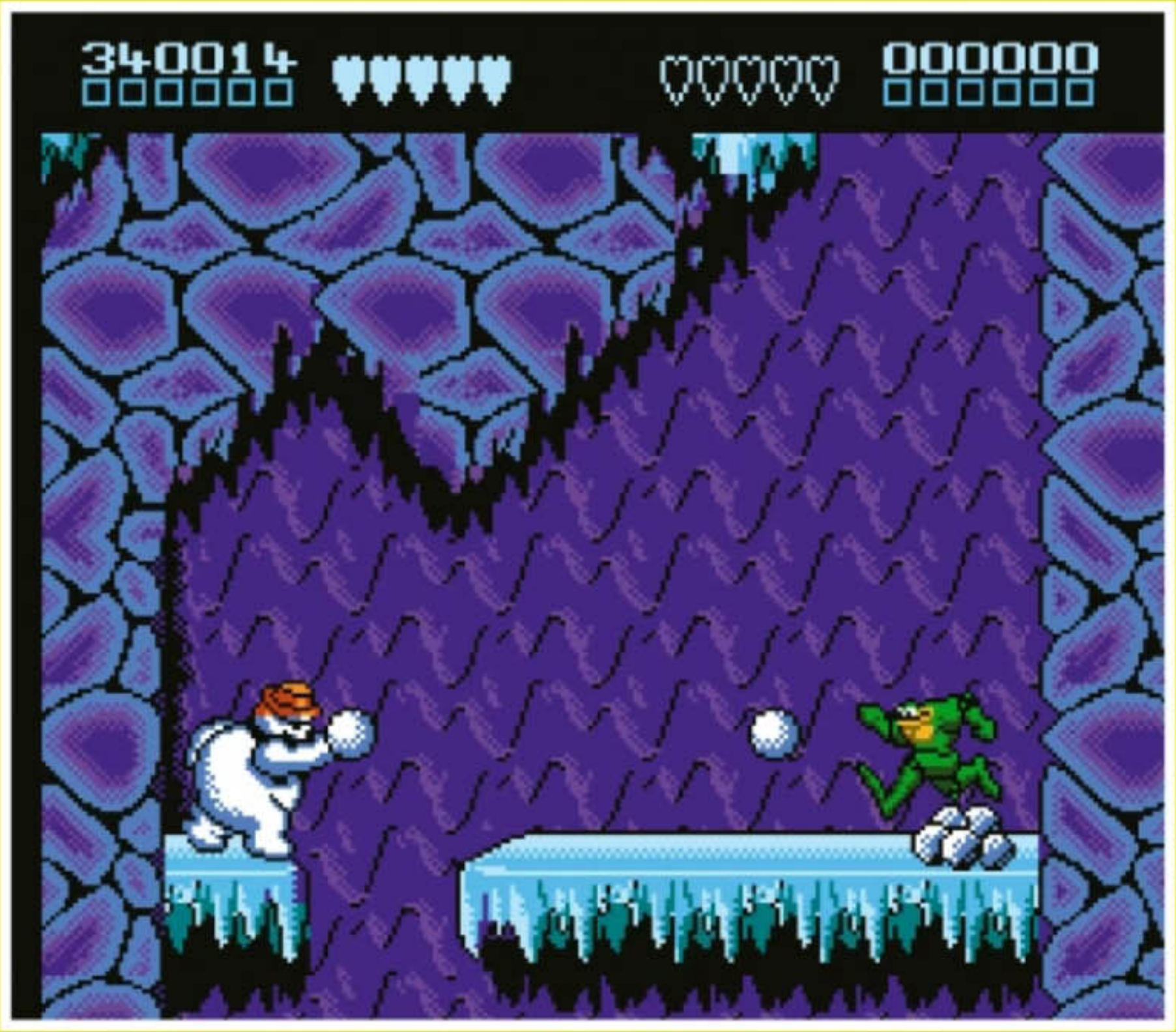
BANJO-KAZOOIE
SYSTEM: N64
YEAR: 1998



» Yes, that spaceship – the Dark Queen's Gargantua – is eating the toads' ride!

with the airbrush he did a fantastic job of the one we ended up with. We also made a style guide containing all of the characters within the game, we wanted as much of the concept illustrated on paper as possible. The style guides were used for reference when working with Nintendo. Putting them together also allowed us to present visually to the companies that became involved in marketing. I was busy working on the style guide and some of the other graphics for the game, but I wouldn't say that I spent anywhere near as many hours working on the game as Mark did. As usual, he practically lived at Rare when he worked on the game and got really into the thick of it."

Of course, before marketing *Battletoads*, the task of in-house testing the finished product remained, with the general feeling at Rare being that they had produced a title that was tough but fair. "I think Mark always wanted it to be difficult," Kevin admits, "It was never impossible, but always just required practice and of course some skill. The NES controllers were bulletproof little pads that were actually really responsive and could take some serious shit, but the game was tested on many controllers to make sure it was possible to play *right*, and it was, but you had to put in the practice. As a fighting game enthusiast I preferred the brawling levels. I could never complete it, but then there's nothing worse than a game that is too easy!"



» A spirited game of snowballs? Nope, these icy spheres are deadly, so duck, toad!

On its release, the idea that *Battletoads* might be too easy was either skilfully concealed in the glowing reviews that the game received or, far more likely, was simply not considered. Just as importantly, the impressive sales that the title enjoyed confirmed that NES gamers' appreciation for *Battletoads* matched the fevered enthusiasm shown by the videogames press. Further games in the series were now a formality, but *Battletoads* would also have a second less obvious legacy. "*Battletoads* became a template in some way," Kevin reasons, "perhaps *Battletoads*, when you think about it, was a changing point for Rare, and a lot of the game's elements echo throughout many of the company's later titles. Eventually it became kind of a trademark I guess, and future Rare games were often varied in the same kind of way as *Battletoads*."

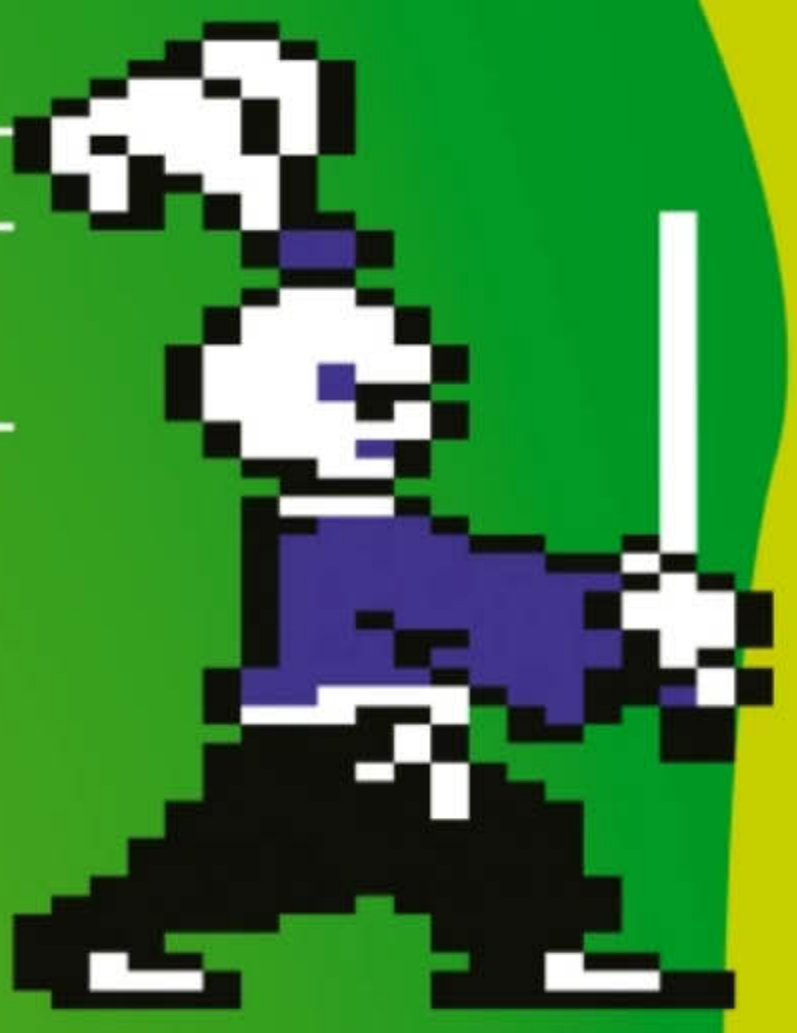
Battletoads may be far from a template for Rare's current output, but like many gamers, Kevin feels that the seminal scrolling brawler stands up against anything that Rare or anyone else was producing at the time. "Most of the games we produced were top quality," Kevin beams, "some titles were stronger than others, but we learned as the company grew about what people wanted in a game. We always, always tried to make sure they were just fun to play, and that they would give a challenge to anyone who picked them up. When I see *Battletoads*, I see a lot of game rammed into that NES cart, and compared to a lot of the other games that were out at the time it offered a lot more. It looked great, sounded and played fantastic and it set the path for more *Battletoads* games, which proved its success. It's definitely one I'm proud of being a part of."

Many thanks to Kevin Bayliss for making this article possible.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGHTERS

Other animals with distinctly un-animal-like behaviour

MIYAMOTO USAGI



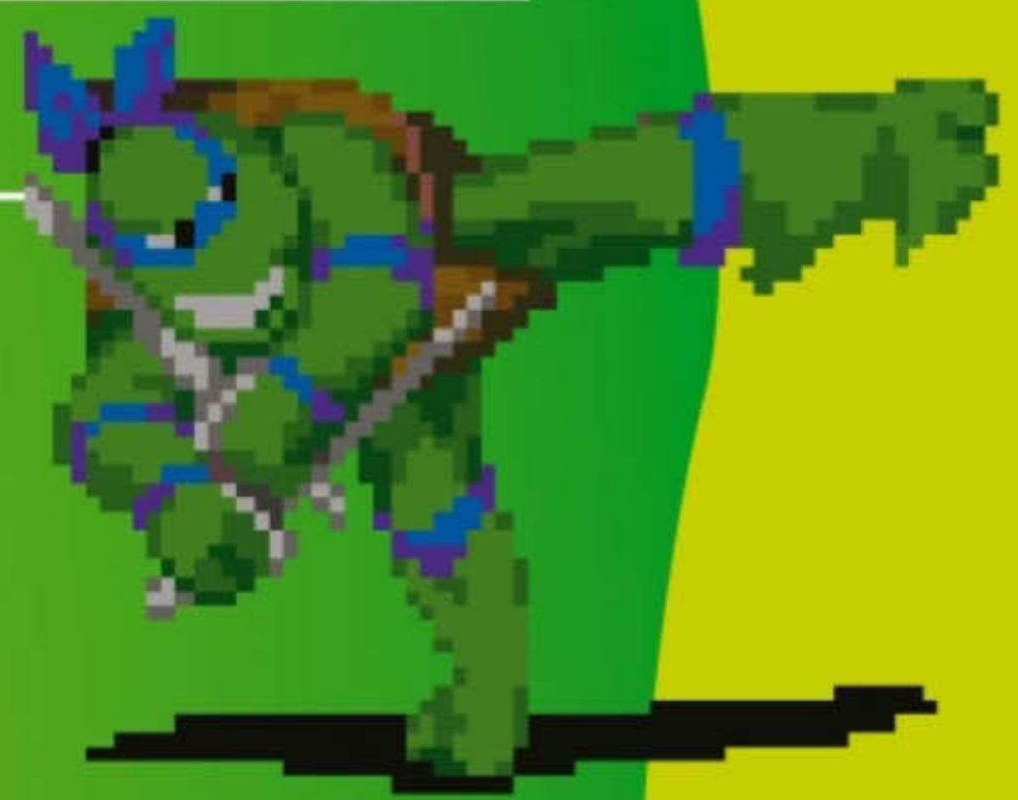
SPECIES: Rabbit

MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:

Samurai Warrior: The Battles Of Usagi Yojimbo

■ The creation of writer/artist Stan Sakai, Miyamoto Usagi appears in Dark Horse Comics' *Usagi Yojimbo* – which translates as "rabbit bodyguard". Usagi is a ronin who wanders ancient Japan on a warrior's pilgrimage. Beam Software skilfully adapted Usagi for the C64 in *Samurai Warrior* – an ambitious action-adventure.

LEONARDO



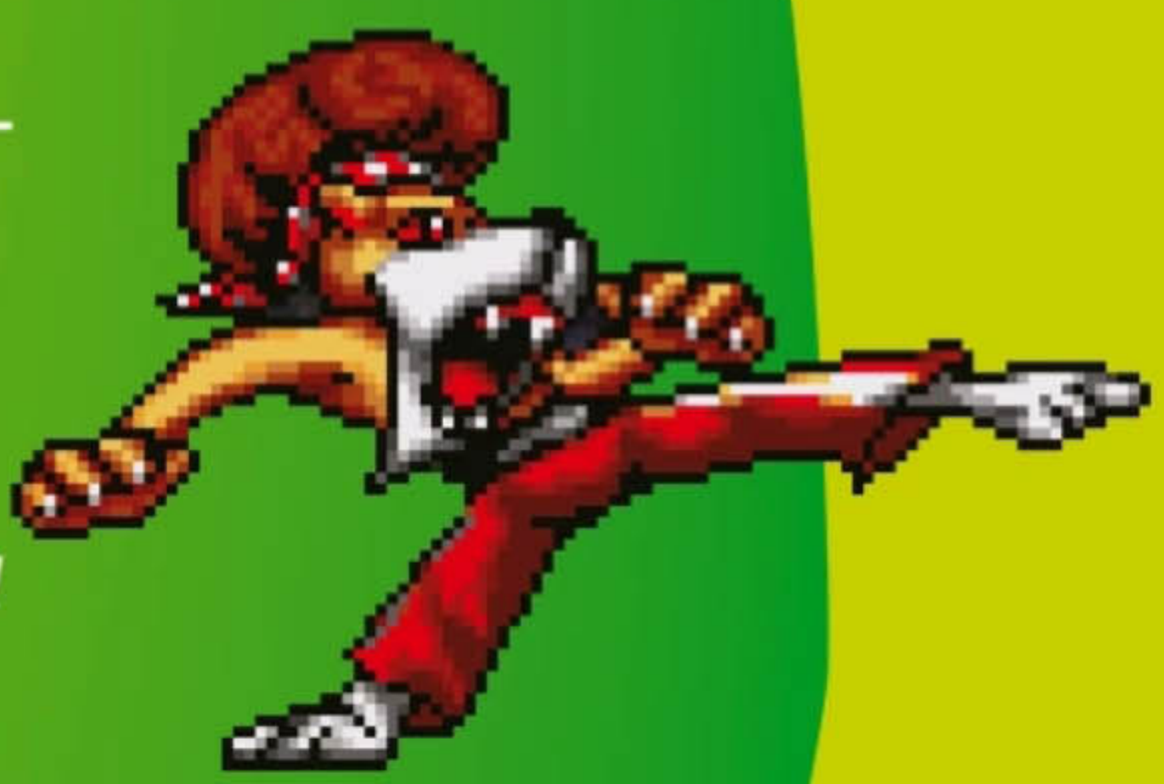
SPECIES: Turtle

MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Turtles In Time

■ Rare likely wouldn't have been too upset by the similarity between Kevin Bayliss's *Battletoads* designs and the hugely successful *Ninja Turtles*. Leonardo is the de-facto leader of the Turtles and was considered the most rounded fighter in their Nineties videogames, the best of which was probably Konami's *Turtles In Time*.

PRINCE LEON



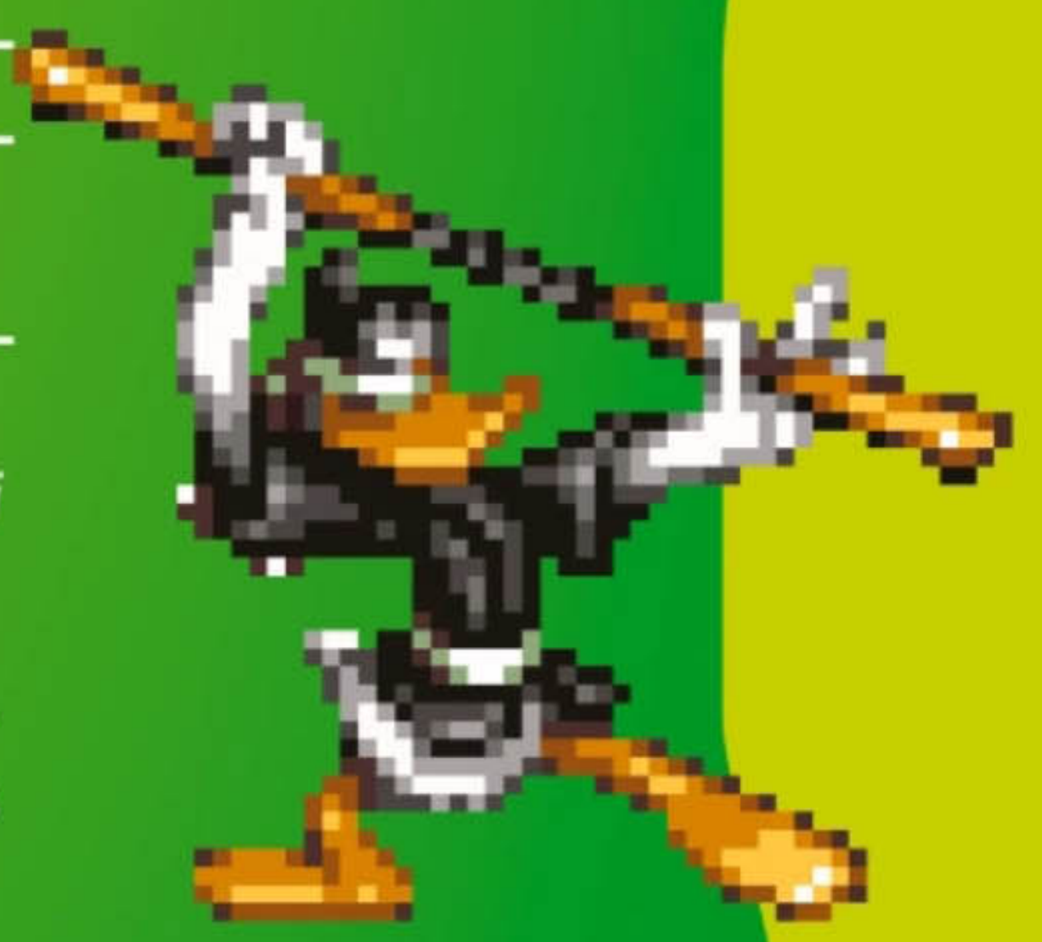
SPECIES: Lion

MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:

Brutal: Above The Claw

■ Based on his 'Powerchord' special attack, Prince Leon of Kenya was something of an aspiring rock star. He featured in GameTek's anthropomorphic versus fighter series *Brutal*. The Sega 32X's *Above The Claw* was the most polished entry in the franchise, but the other *Brutal* games all featured pretty similar gameplay.

COLD SHADOW



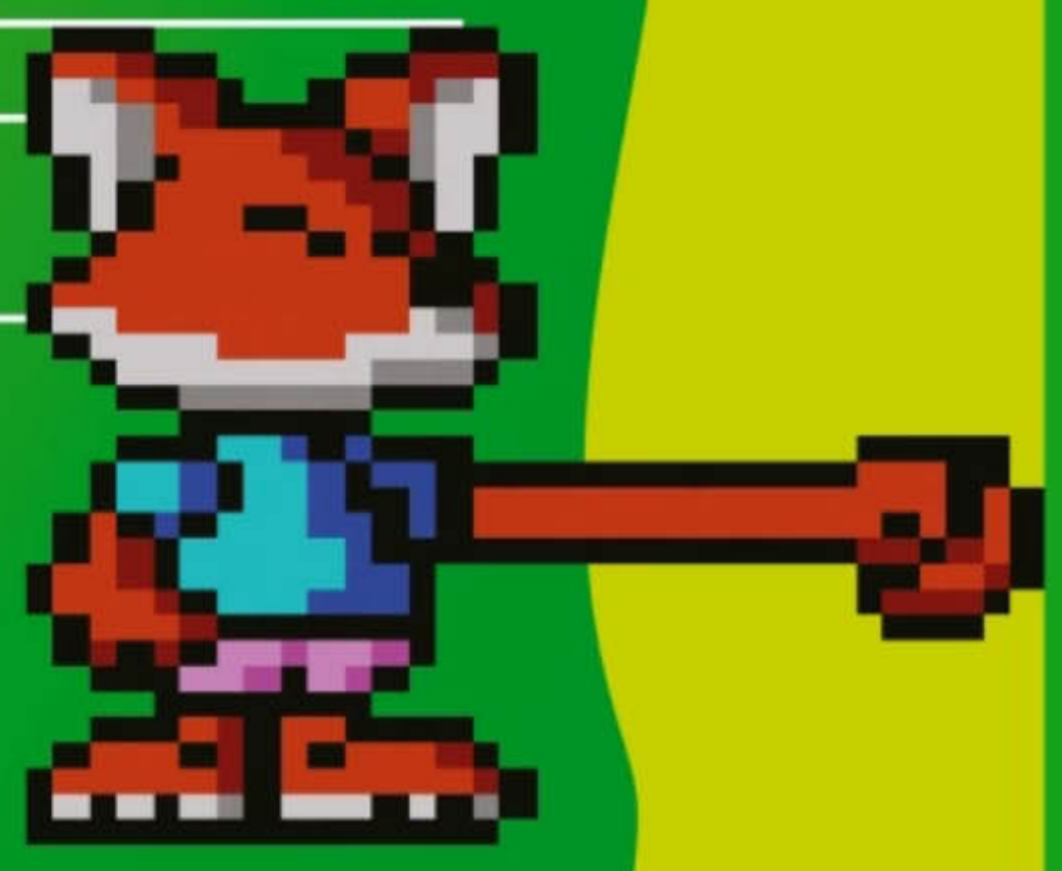
SPECIES: Duck

MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:

Maui Mallard In Cold Shadow

■ Donald Duck used to moonlight as a detective/ninja. No, seriously, there was even a combat platformer called *Maui Mallard In Cold Shadow* where Maui Mallard was Donald's hapless detective cover for a ninja persona – Cold Shadow. 16-bit Disney titles typically impressed, and Cold Shadow's outing fit that trend.

PSYCHO FOX



SPECIES: Fox

MEMORABLE APPEARANCE:

Psycho Fox

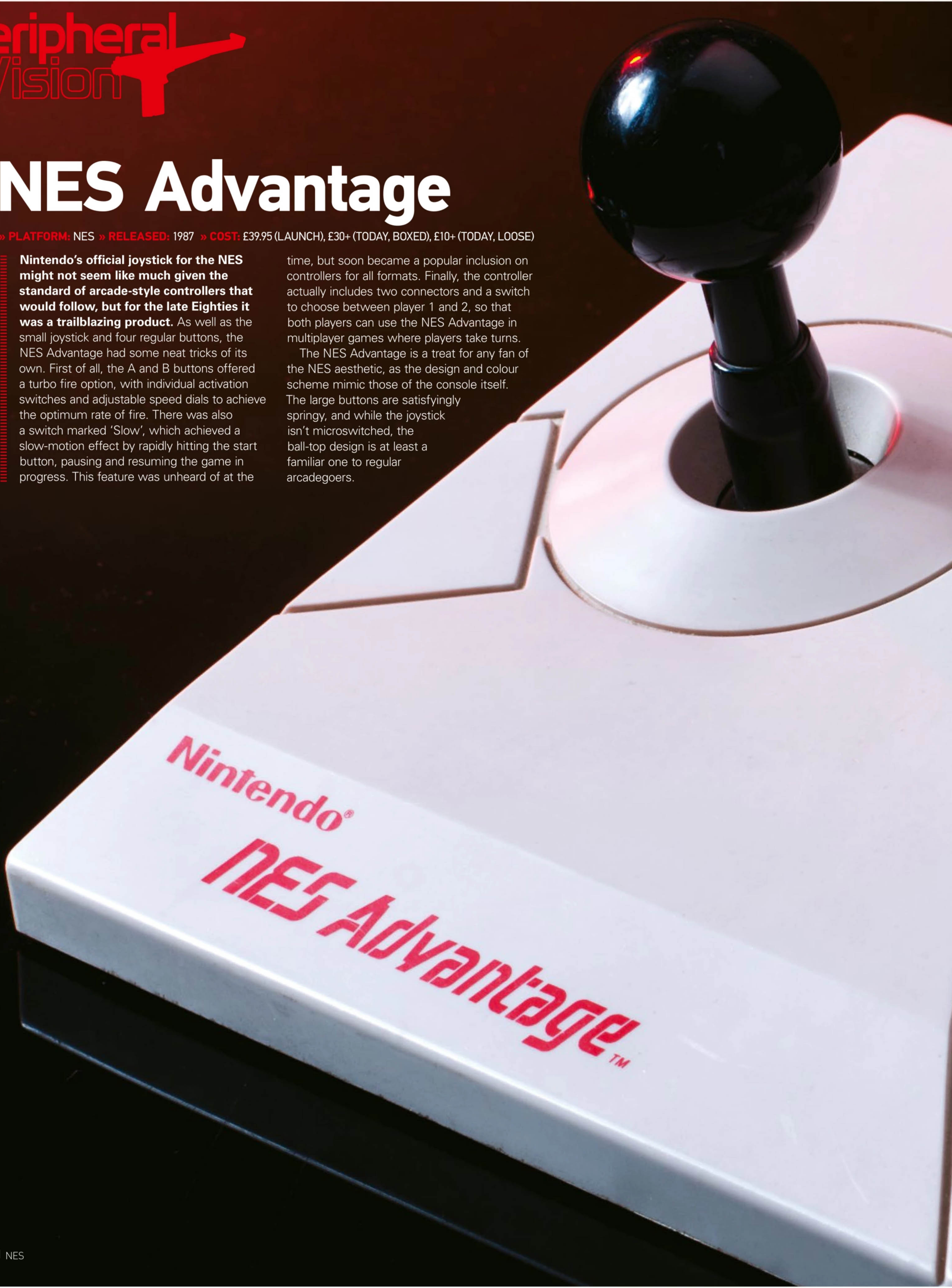
■ He's often likened to Mario, apparently because his one game was on Sega's answer to the NES – the Master System – and because said outing was a colourful platformer. Psycho Fox's most un-Nintendo-like move was taking out opponents by punching them in the face! Well, he was called *Psycho* Fox.

NES Advantage

» PLATFORM: NES » RELEASED: 1987 » COST: £39.95 (LAUNCH), £30+ (TODAY, BOXED), £10+ (TODAY, LOOSE)

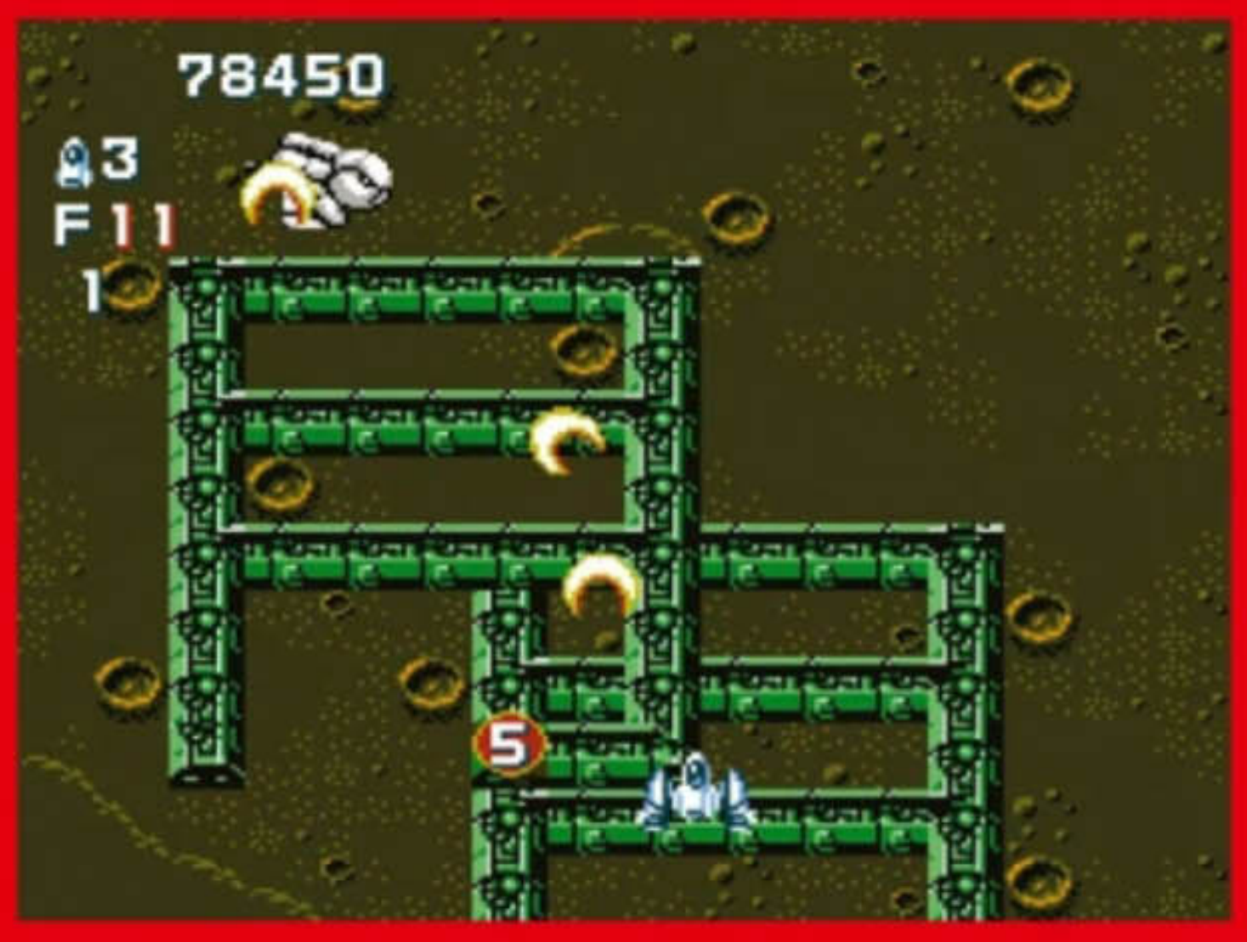
Nintendo's official joystick for the NES might not seem like much given the standard of arcade-style controllers that would follow, but for the late Eighties it was a trailblazing product. As well as the small joystick and four regular buttons, the NES Advantage had some neat tricks of its own. First of all, the A and B buttons offered a turbo fire option, with individual activation switches and adjustable speed dials to achieve the optimum rate of fire. There was also a switch marked 'Slow', which achieved a slow-motion effect by rapidly hitting the start button, pausing and resuming the game in progress. This feature was unheard of at the time, but soon became a popular inclusion on controllers for all formats. Finally, the controller actually includes two connectors and a switch to choose between player 1 and 2, so that both players can use the NES Advantage in multiplayer games where players take turns.

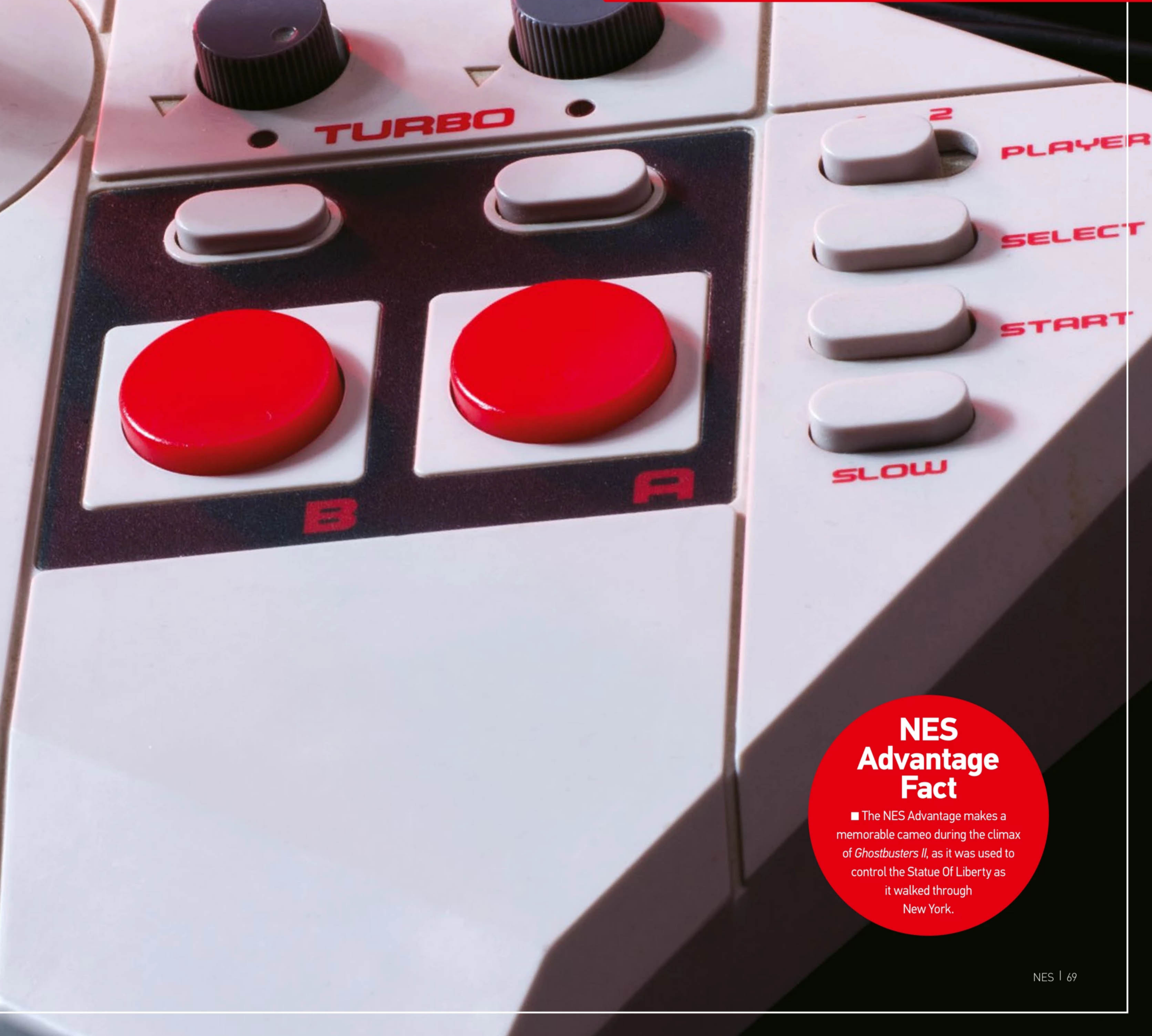
The NES Advantage is a treat for any fan of the NES aesthetic, as the design and colour scheme mimic those of the console itself. The large buttons are satisfyingly springy, and while the joystick isn't microswitched, the ball-top design is at least a familiar one to regular arcadegoers.



ESSENTIAL GAME Gun-Nac

Shoot-'em-ups can always benefit from a good joystick controller, especially one with an excellent turbo function, and *Gun-Nac* is a very good example of this. After adjusting the dial to the sweet spot, you'll be pumping out hot laser death at previously unseen speeds. It also doesn't hurt that Compile's flair for crafting fast-paced and memorable shoot-'em-ups is on full display here, ensuring that this blaster is one of the finest available for Nintendo's 8-bit platform. The only downside is the extraordinary cost of purchasing a copy for yourself, as even loose American NES cartridges routinely pass the £150 mark.



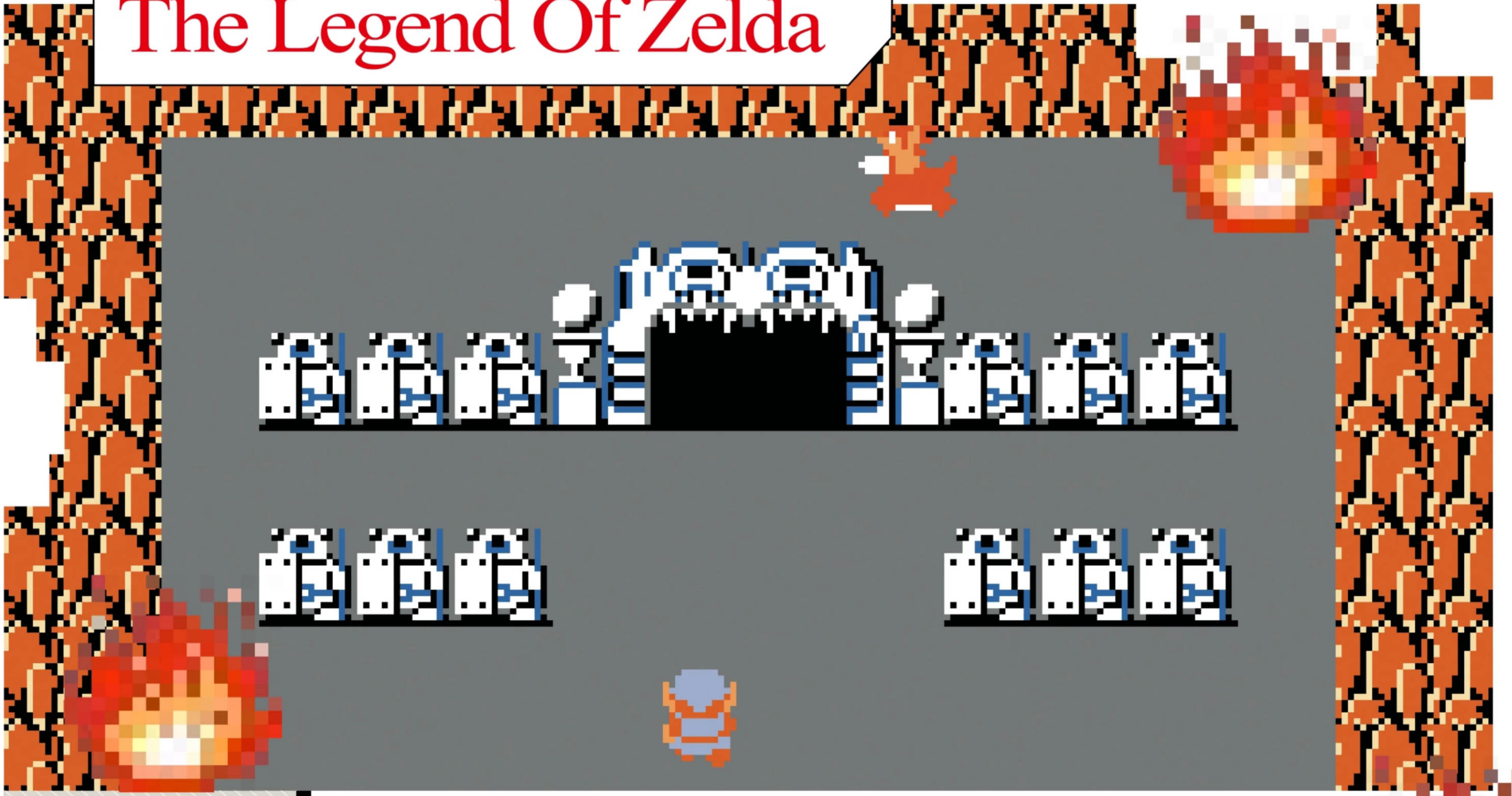


NES Advantage Fact

■ The NES Advantage makes a memorable cameo during the climax of *Ghostbusters II*, as it was used to control the Statue Of Liberty as it walked through New York.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO…

The Legend Of Zelda



Instant Expert

The Legend Of Zelda is the most non-linear adventure in the series. You can tackle the dungeons in almost any order you like, and the game can be finished without ever collecting the sword.

The Legend Of Zelda was the first NES title to sell over a million copies and went on to sell 6.5 million in total.

Though the map for *Zelda*'s third dungeon resembles a Nazi swastika, it is actually the much more innocuous manji, an ancient religious symbol used by Japanese Buddhists, which is the reverse of the infamous emblem and is common in Eastern philosophy.

Link is an unusual hero in that, in the first game and canonically throughout the series, he is left-handed. Perhaps by coincidence, the word 'links' is German for 'left'.

Complete *The Legend Of Zelda* and you can play a second quest with different dungeon layouts and item placements. If you want to skip straight to it, enter your name as 'ZELDA' at the start.

Princess Zelda is named after Zelda Fitzgerald, wife of novelist Francis Scott Fitzgerald.

When *Zelda* arrived in the US and Europe it was ported from disk to cartridge and became the first console game to include a battery to store save data.

Ashley Day argues that Nintendo's seminal adventure game isn't just an important piece of history but a game that's still great to play today. Discover one of Nintendo's greatest adventures

You really have to hand it to Miyamoto and his band at Nintendo. To make one of the greatest and most important videogames of all time, in the shape of *Super Mario Bros*, was one thing. But to repeat the same trick just a year later, and in a completely different genre, is just incredible.

In fact, there isn't even a year between *Super Mario Bros* and *The Legend Of Zelda*. There was only five months between the Japanese release dates of each game, yet the latter represents a giant stride from the former in terms of game design. Where *Mario* was brilliantly simple, placing you at the start of a linear journey and merely asking you to move a little plumber to the right, *Zelda* offered a world of possibility by comparison.

Starting off in the middle of the vast land of Hyrule, it put you in control of a left-handed elf-like boy named Link, with three possible exits standing before him, and then… did nothing. No instructions, no dialogue, no hints. Just the promise of adventure and an invitation into the unknown. Which way should you go? Well that was entirely up to you, and that was the entire point of the game. There was an ultimate goal, of course – to collect the eight scattered pieces of the Triforce of Wisdom in order to defeat the evil Ganon and rescue the eponymous Princess Zelda – but it was the open nature of how you approached this task that really made *The Legend Of Zelda* so compelling.

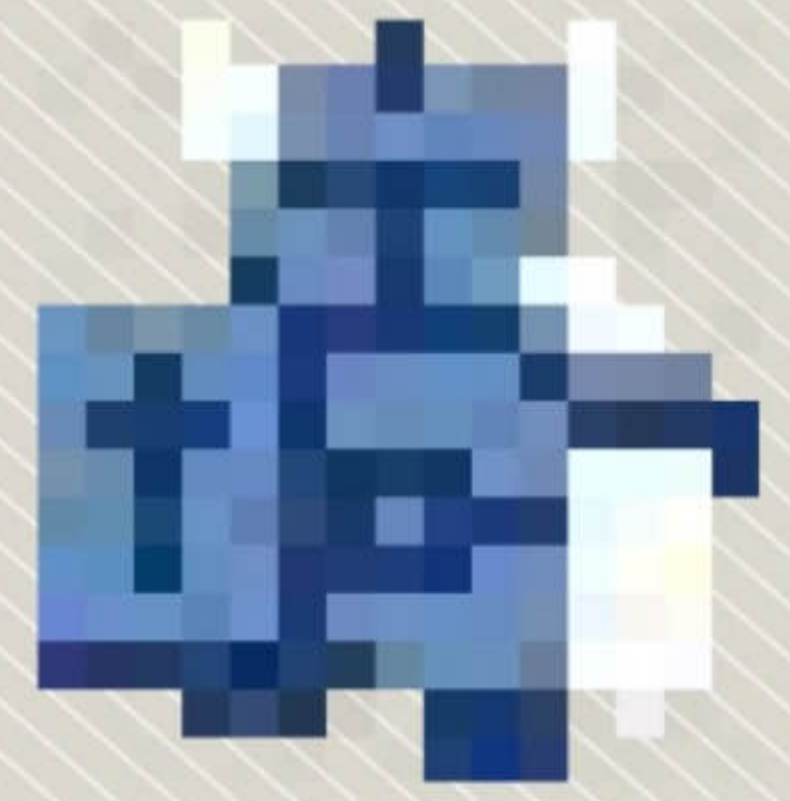
It's a well-known story that Miyamoto's inspiration for *Zelda* came from his childhood memories of exploring the Japanese countryside without a map and the pleasure that he got from discovering places he had no previous knowledge of. The goal of the *Zelda* project was to capture that childlike fascination with the unknown, the sense of wonder that the world can provoke when everything around you is so new and unusual. And that project also happened to fortuitously coincide with the development of the Famicom Disk System, Nintendo's Famicom add-on that side-stepped the rising cost of ROM chips and allowed developers to create much bigger games than before.

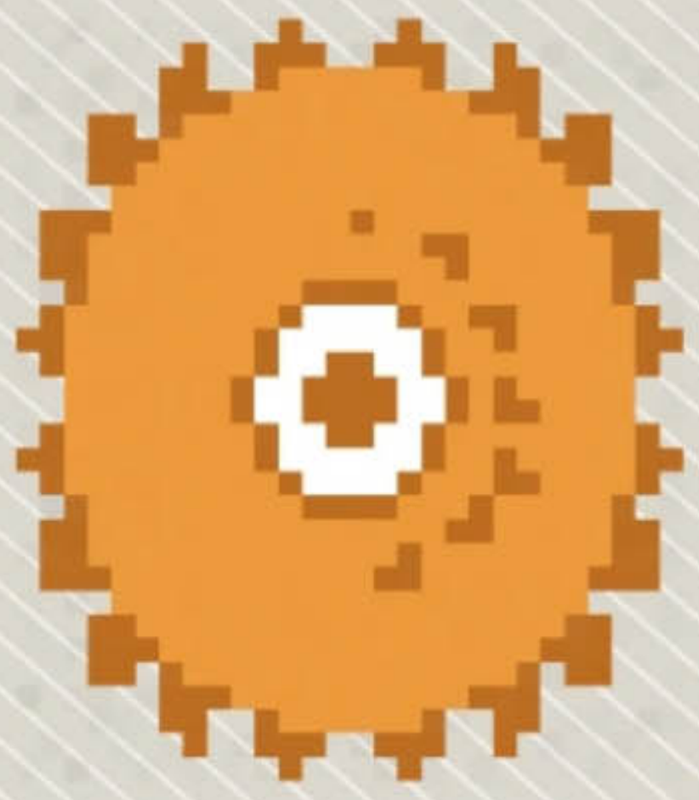
The Disk System's rewritable media also allowed for game progress to be permanently saved without the need for cumbersome passwords, and this was a crucial technological advantage that allowed Nintendo to further distinguish its console games from those of the arcades. Coin-operated arcade games were still the dominant form of videogaming in 1986 and were focused very much on short-term challenge, cyclical and repetitive gameplay, and the thrill of chasing a high score. But Nintendo wanted its games to be something different; something you played over a long period of time, returning to like a good book to enjoy an ever-evolving experience; a journey, rather than the same few seconds over and over again.

This is very much how the modern videogame can be described 25 years

Pixel Perfect

Some of Zelda's familiar characters make their debuts


» Darknut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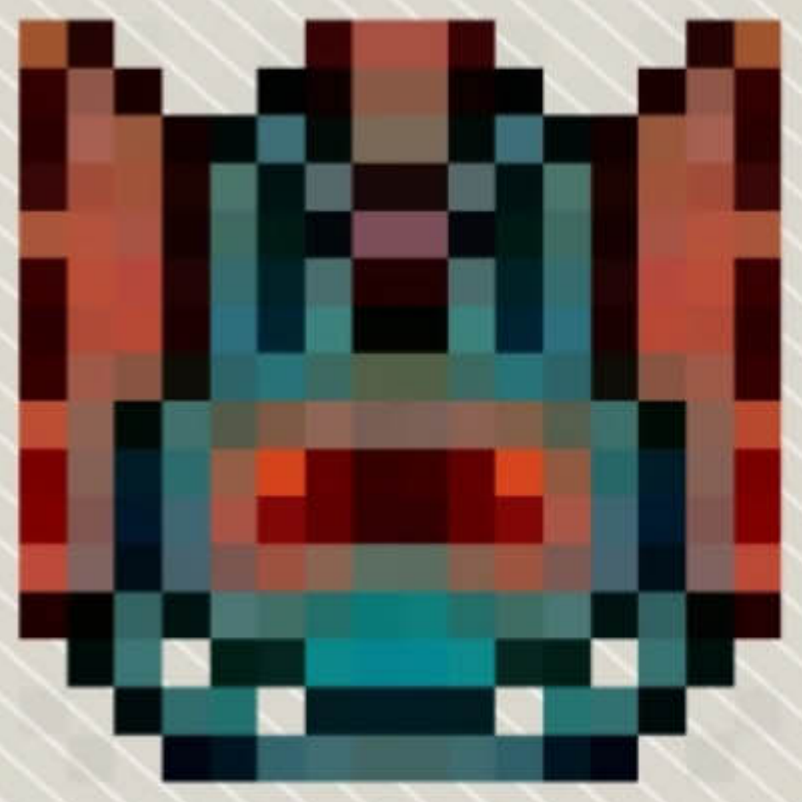
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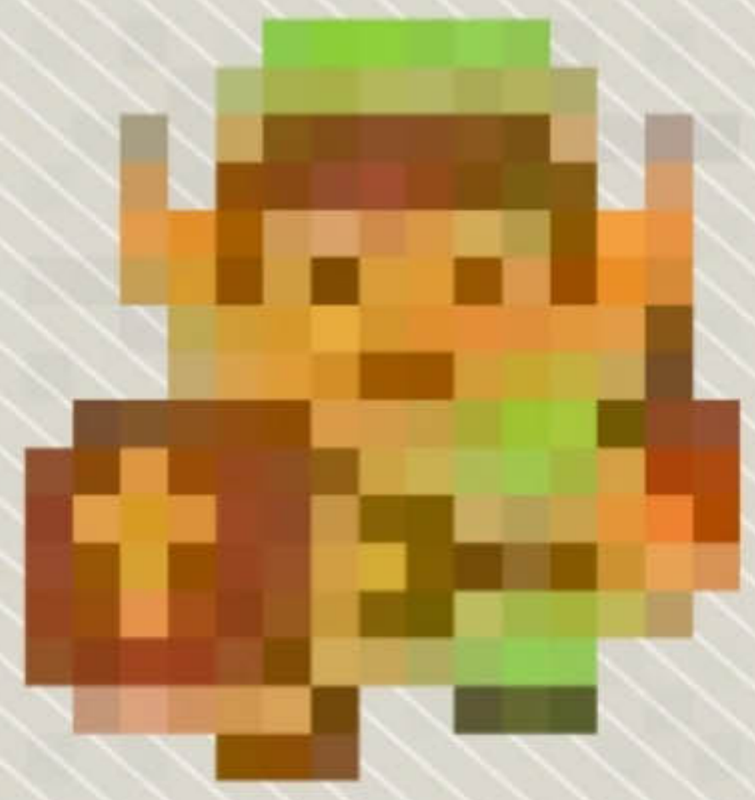
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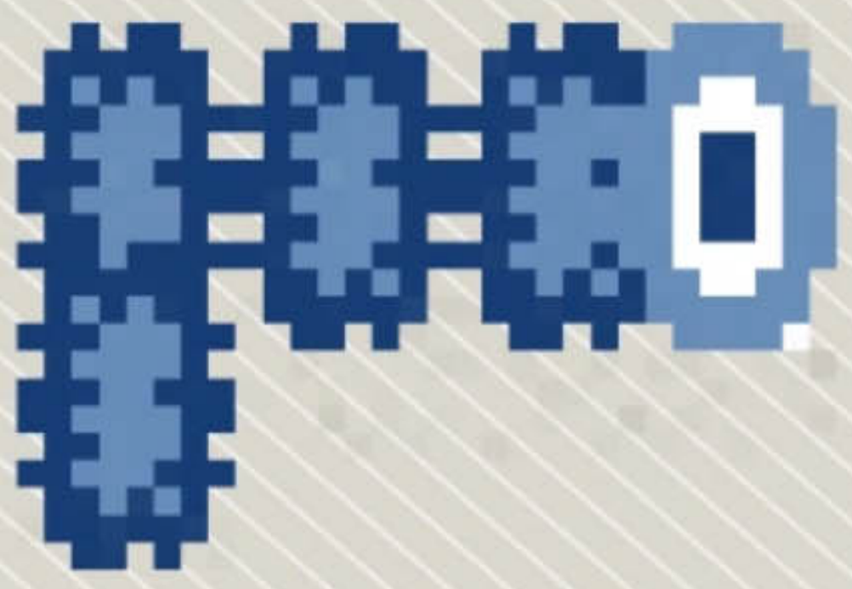
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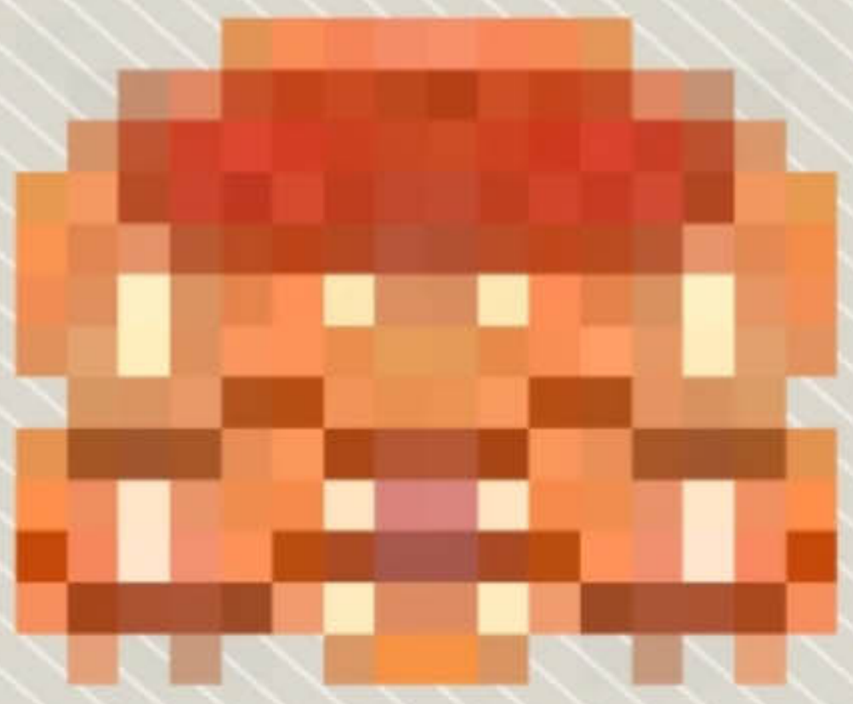
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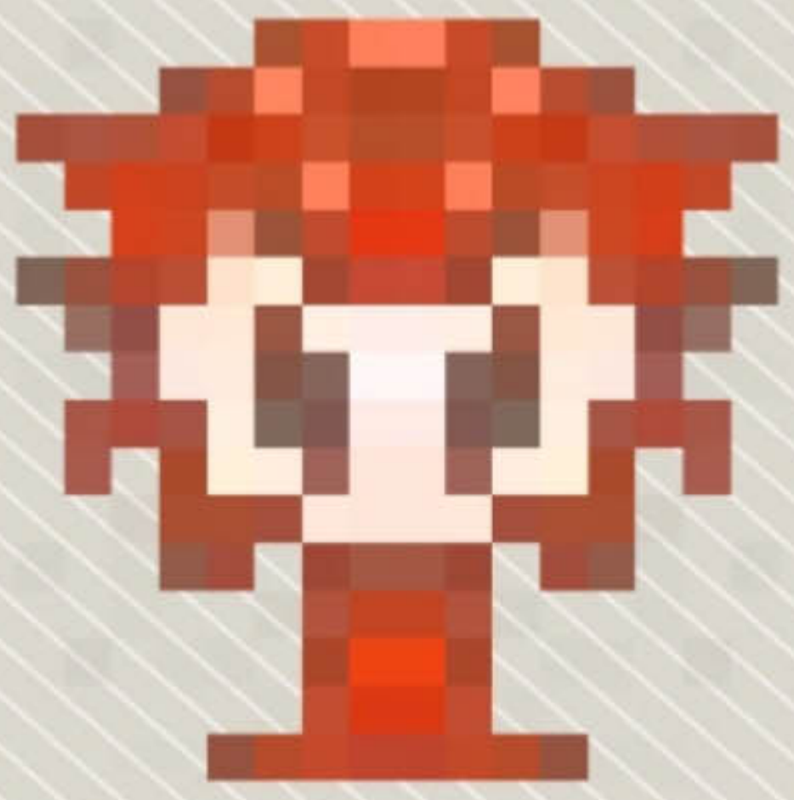
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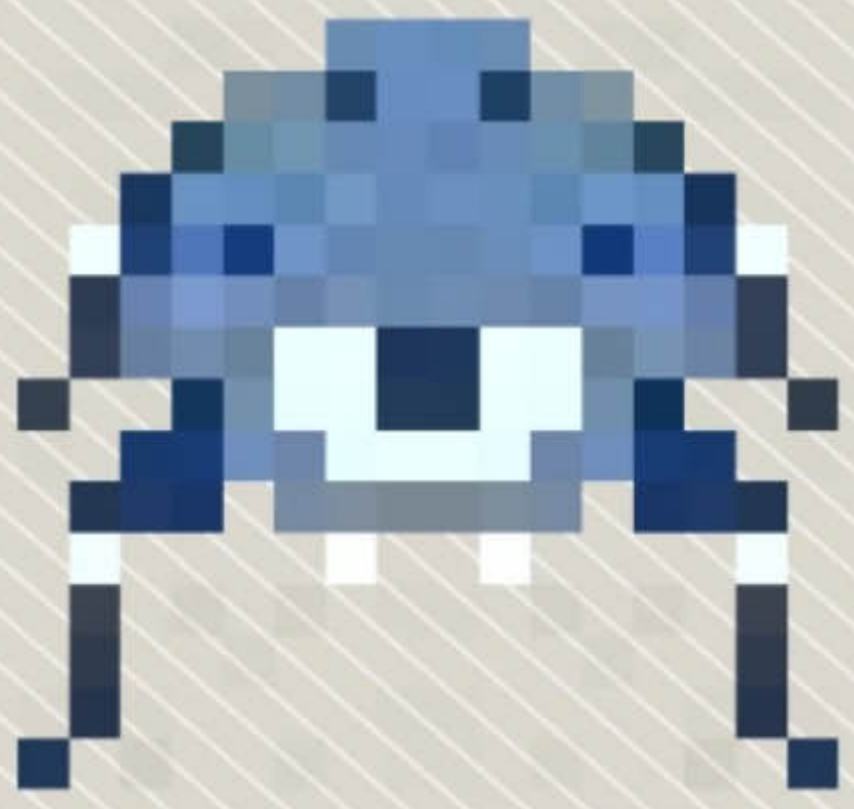
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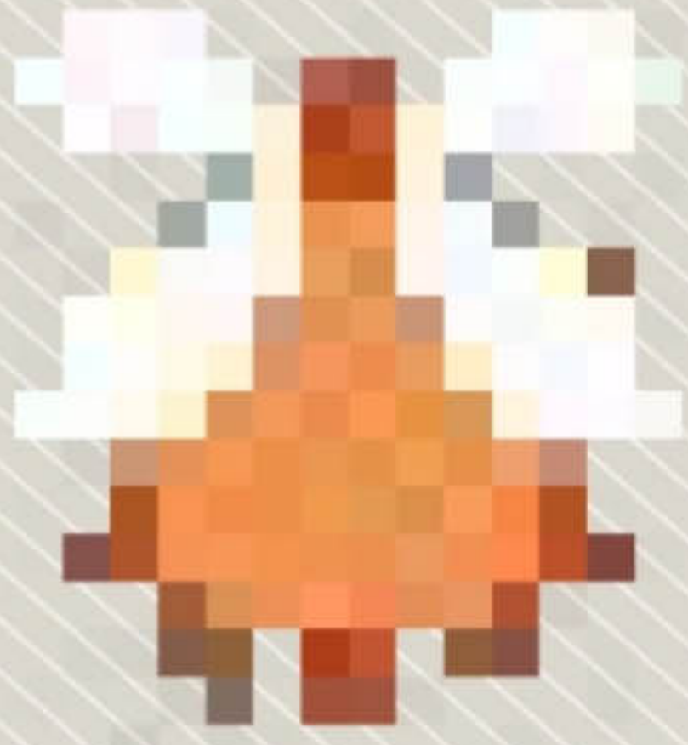
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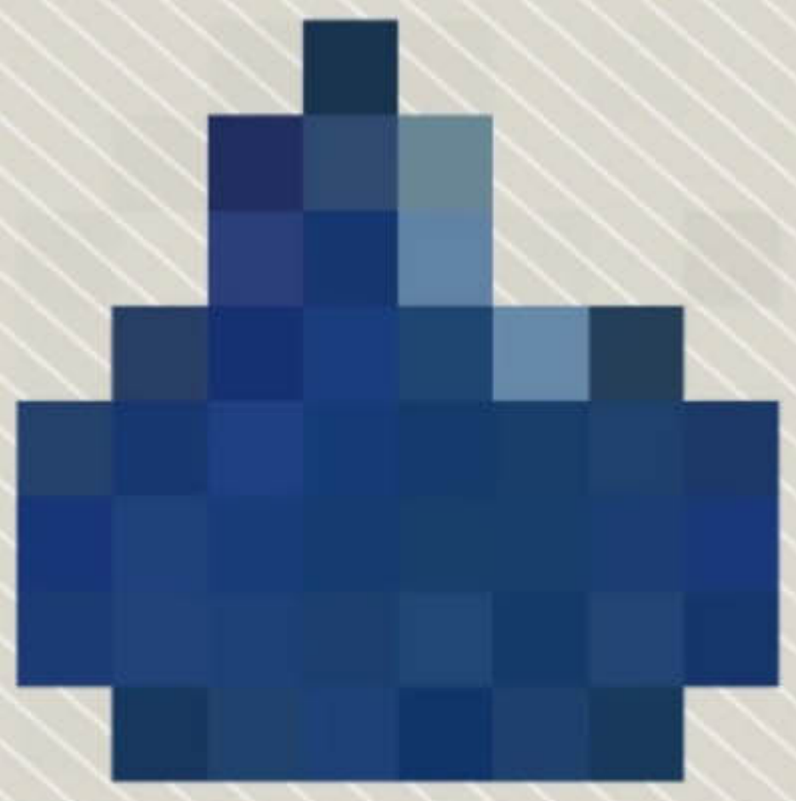
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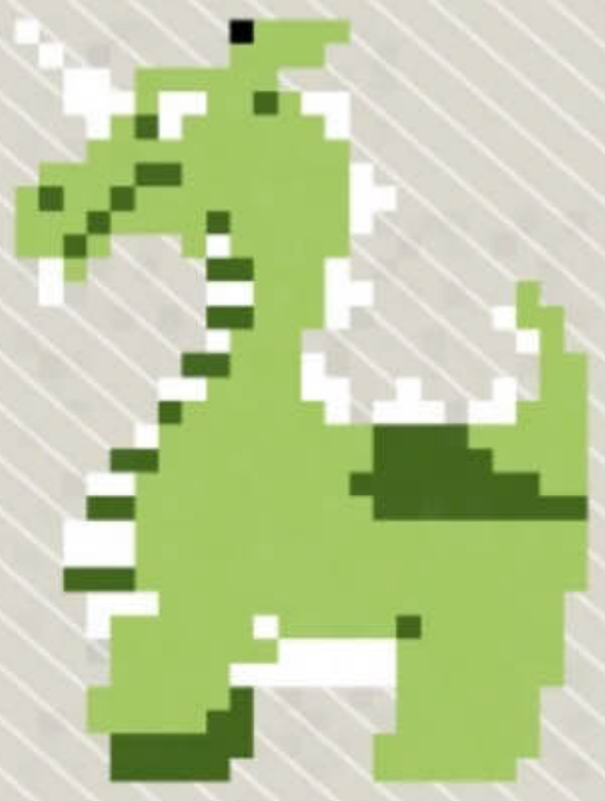
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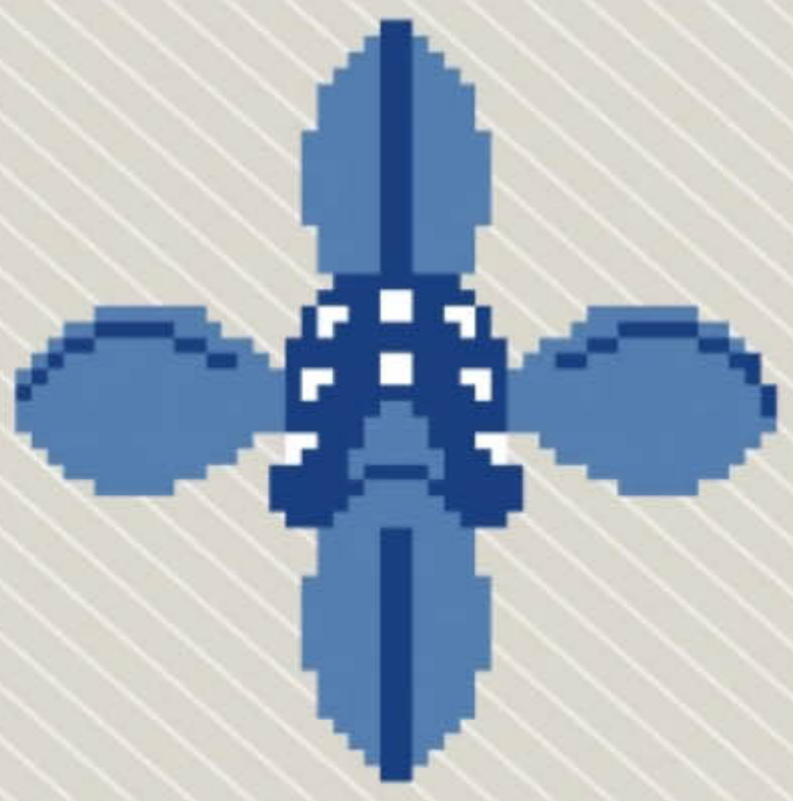
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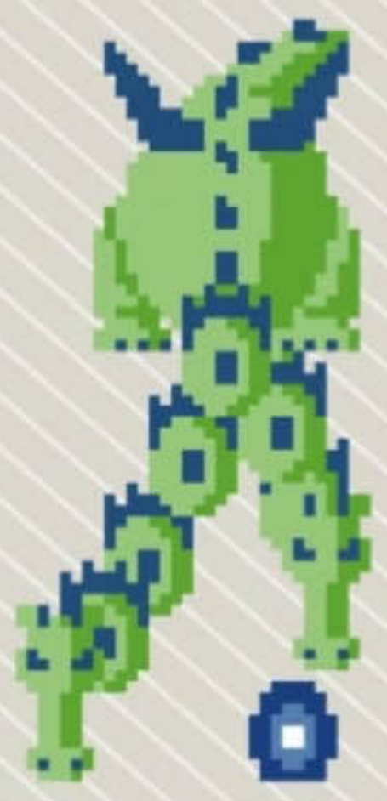
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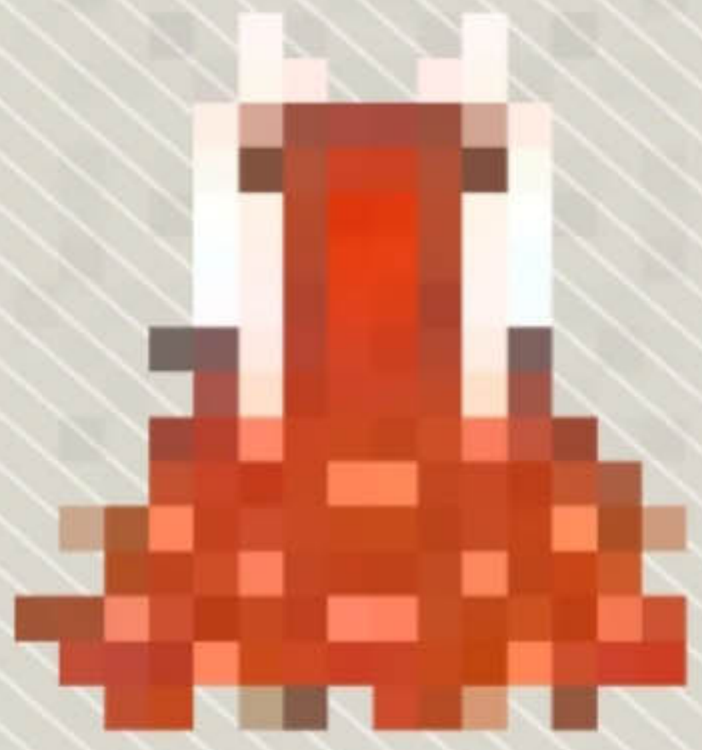
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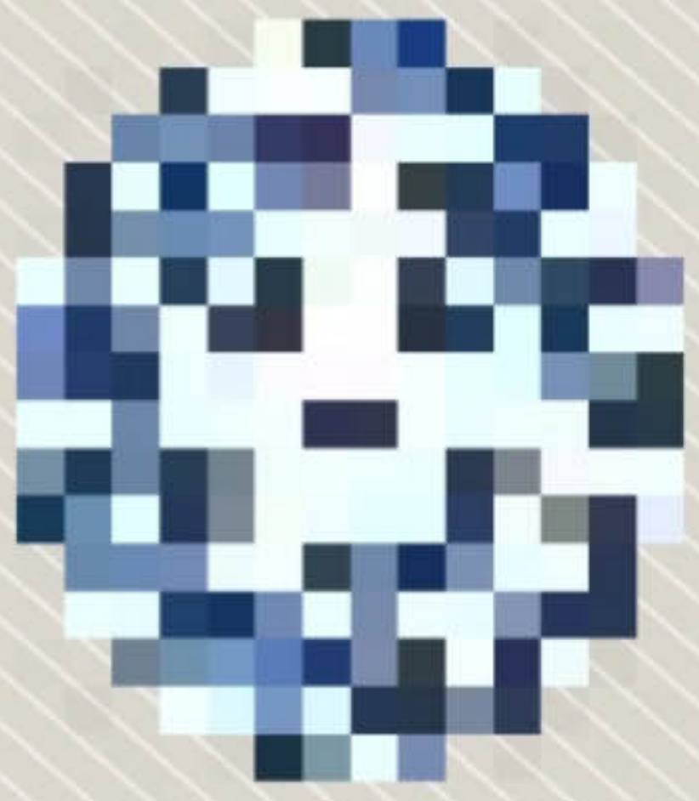
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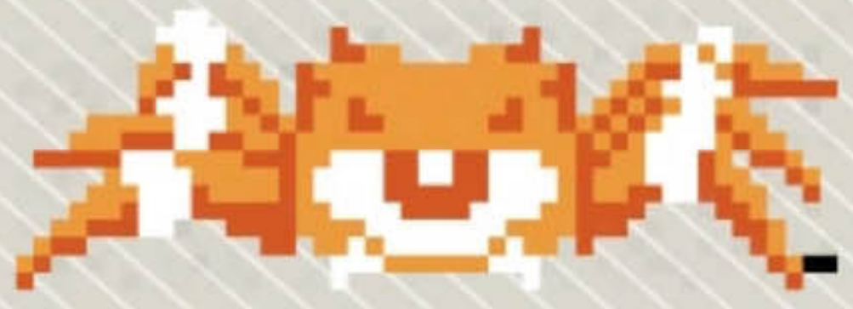
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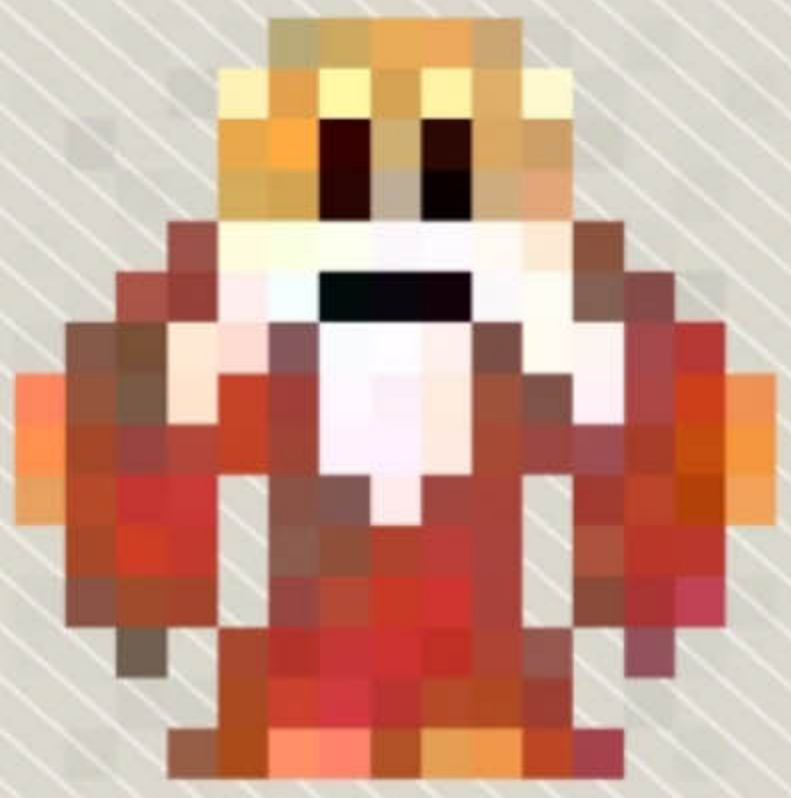
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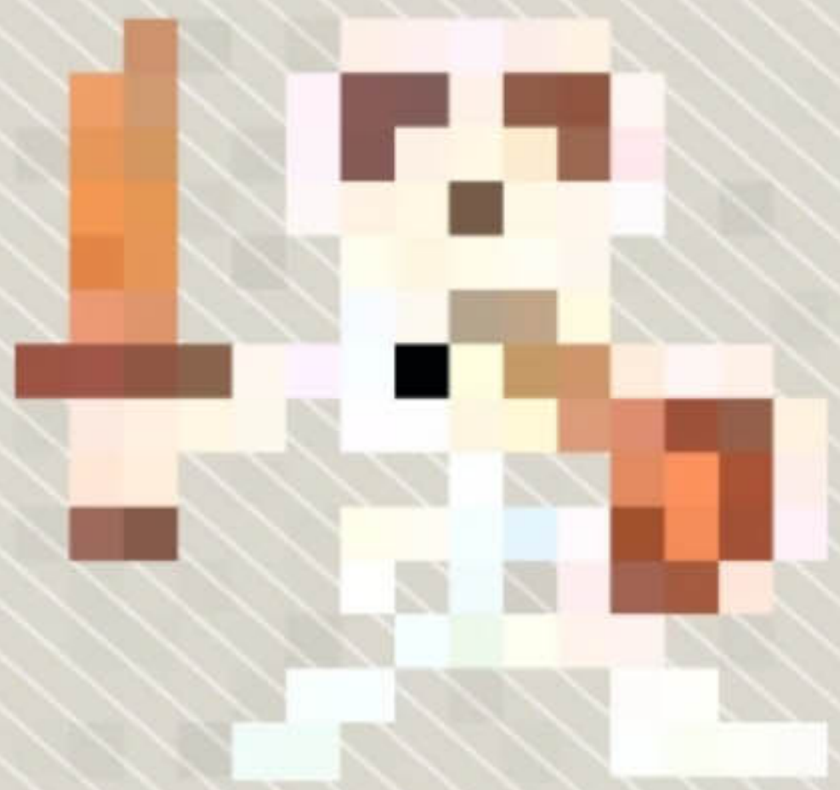
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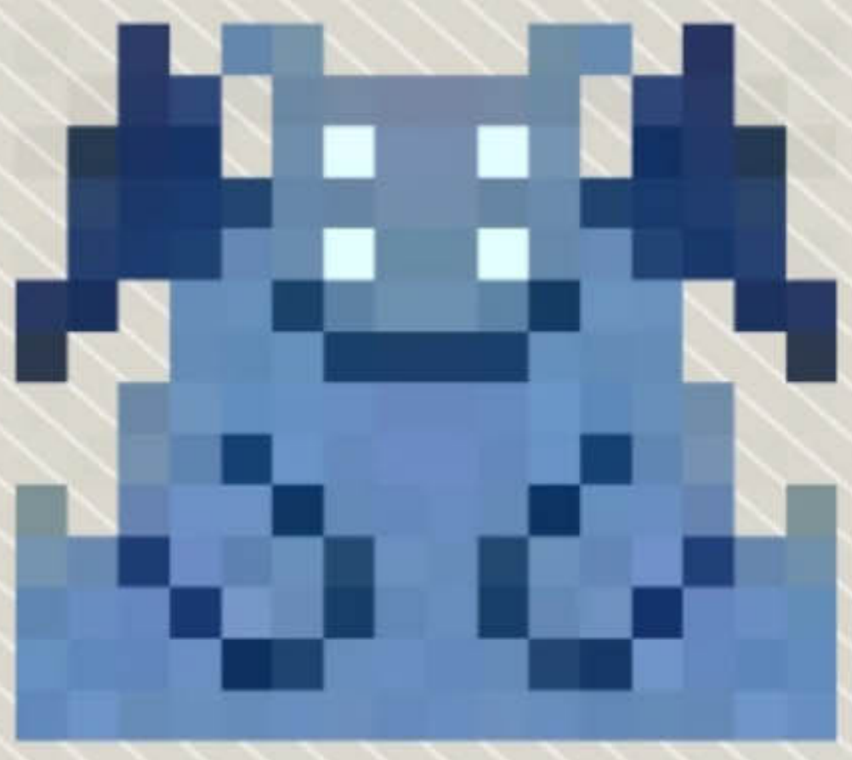
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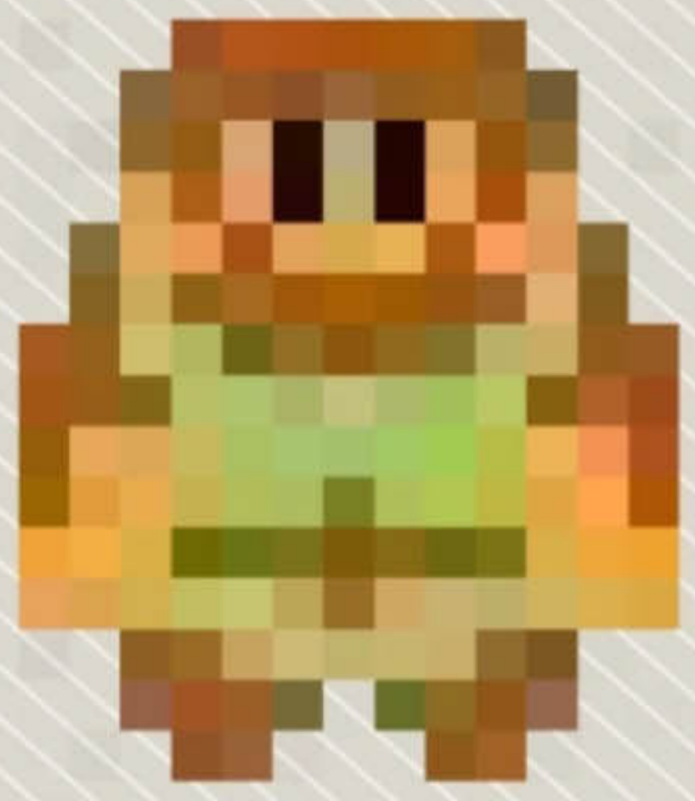
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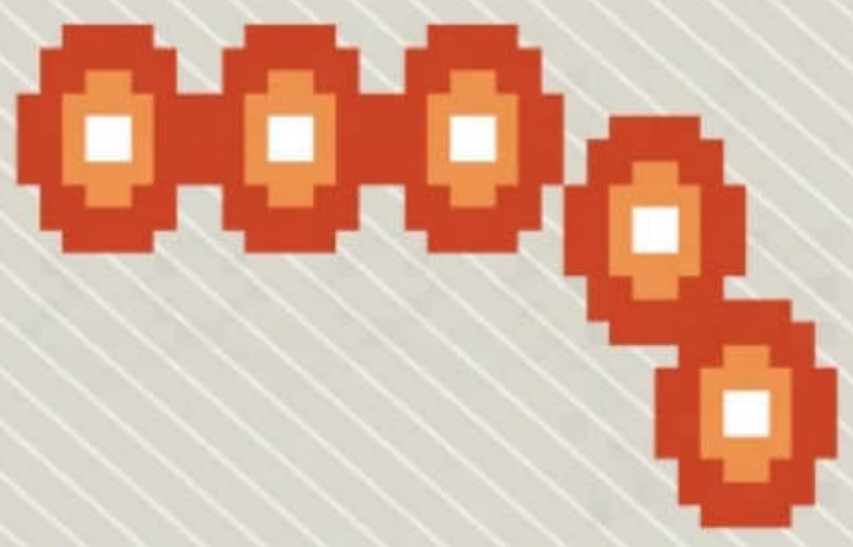
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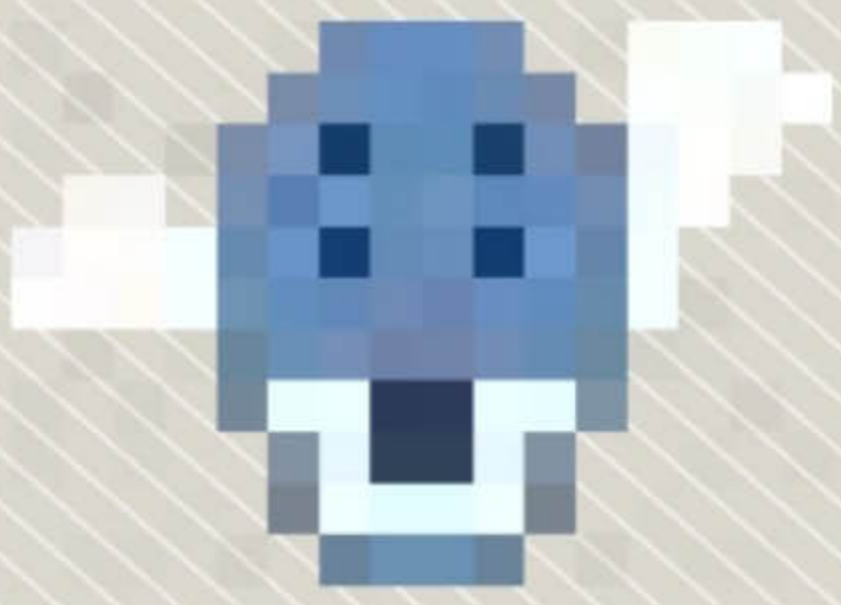
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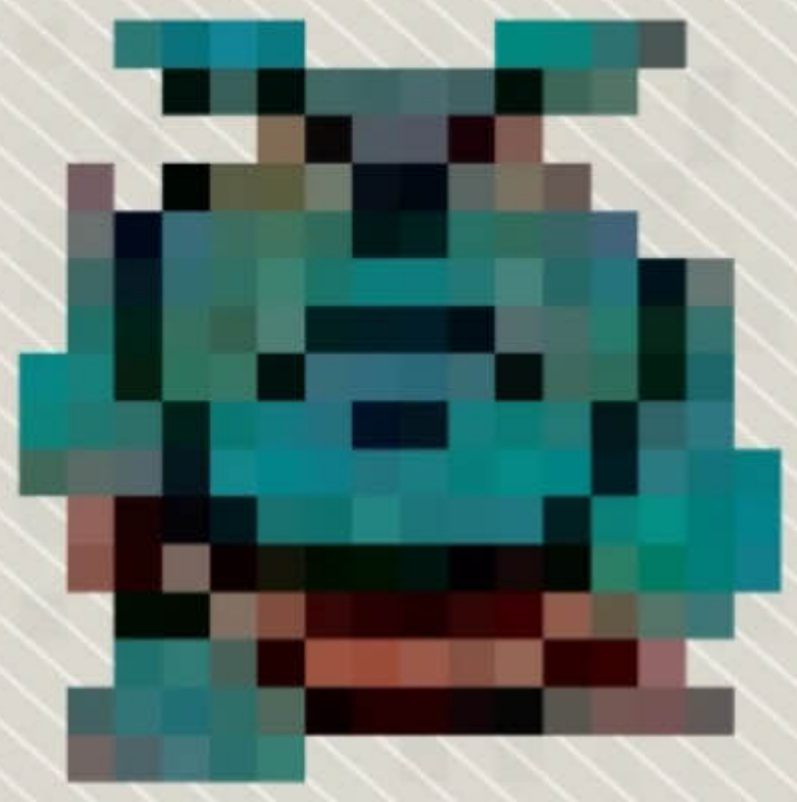
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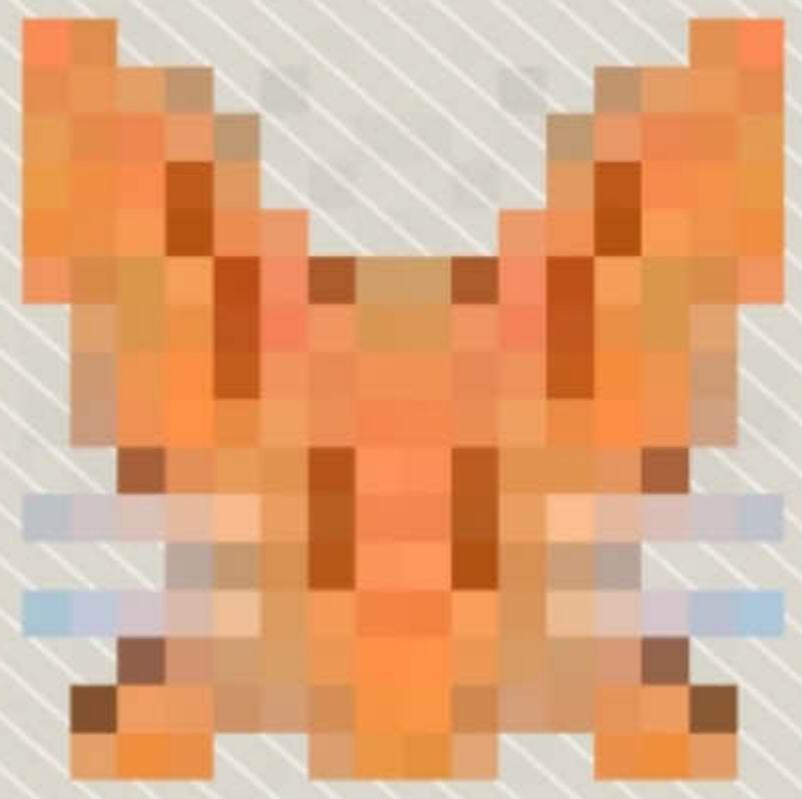
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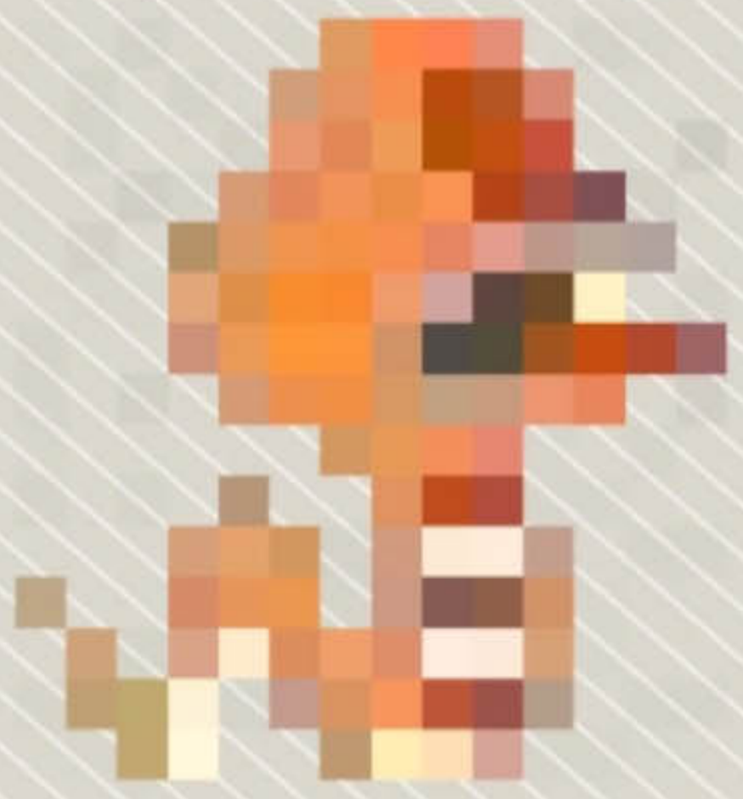
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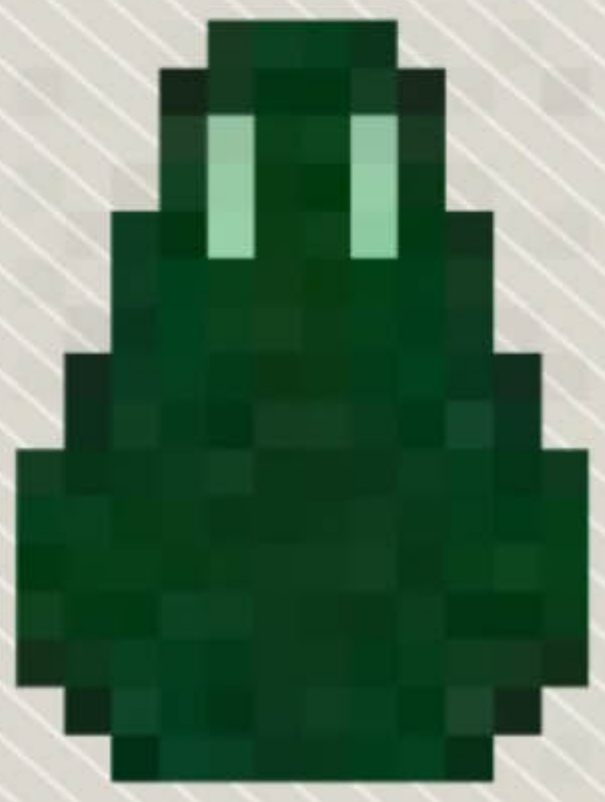
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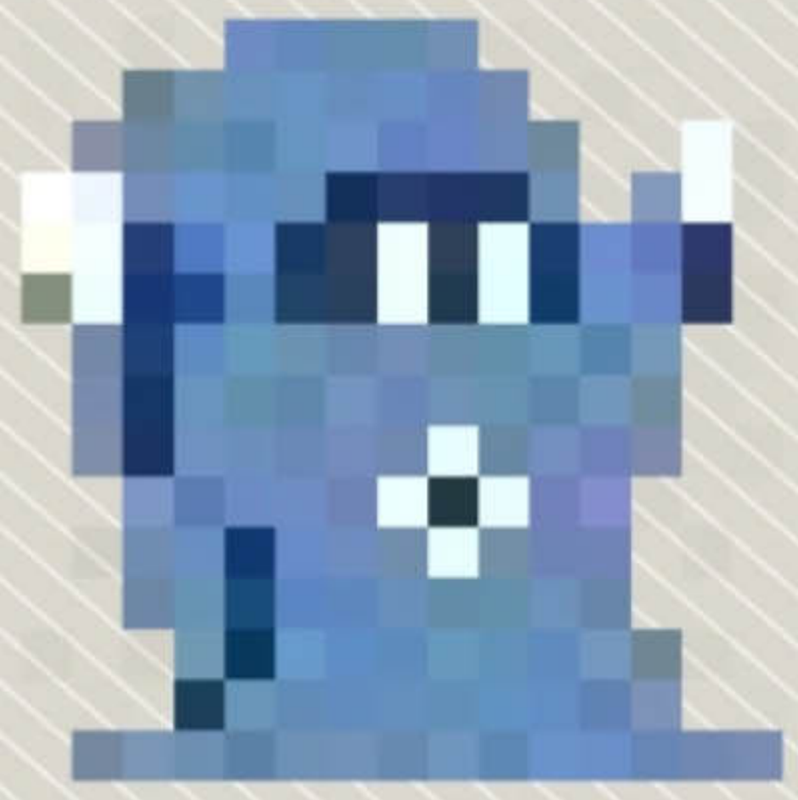
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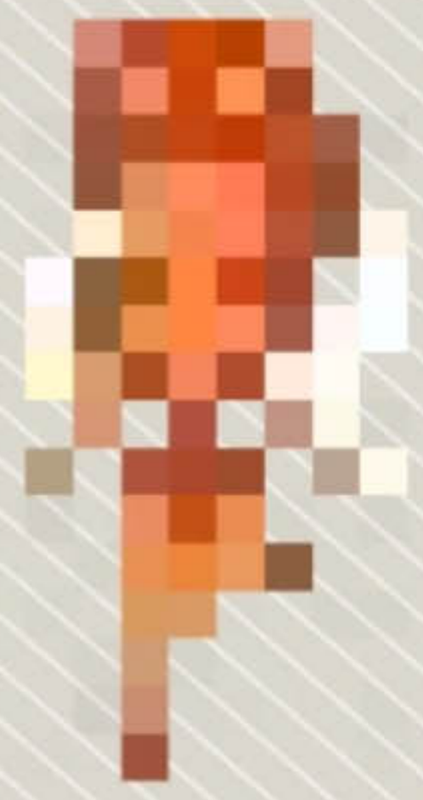
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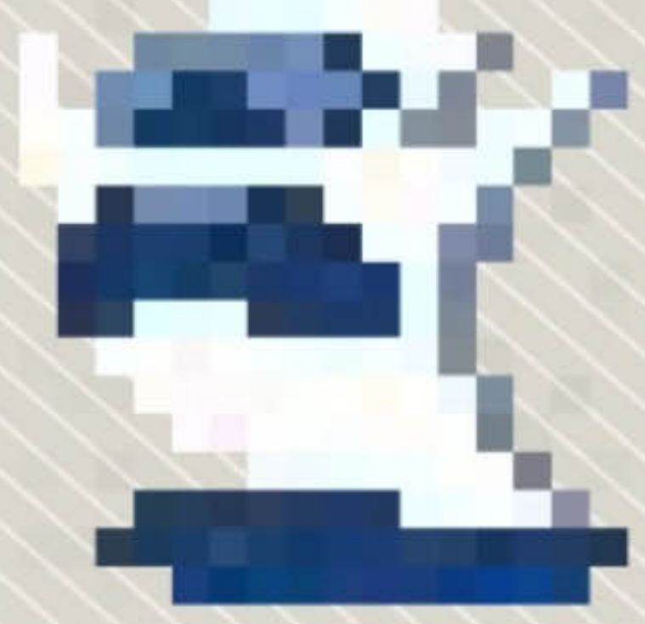
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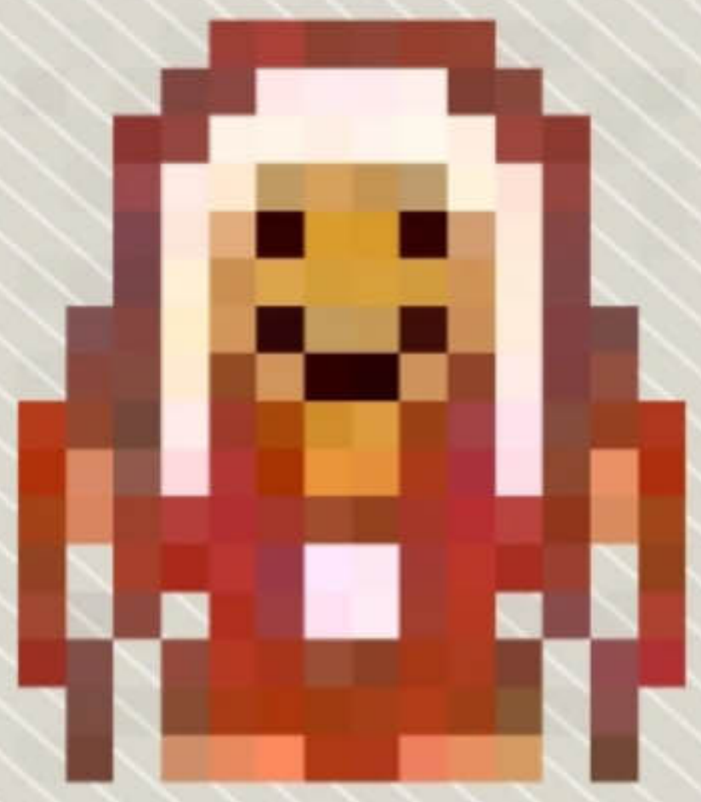
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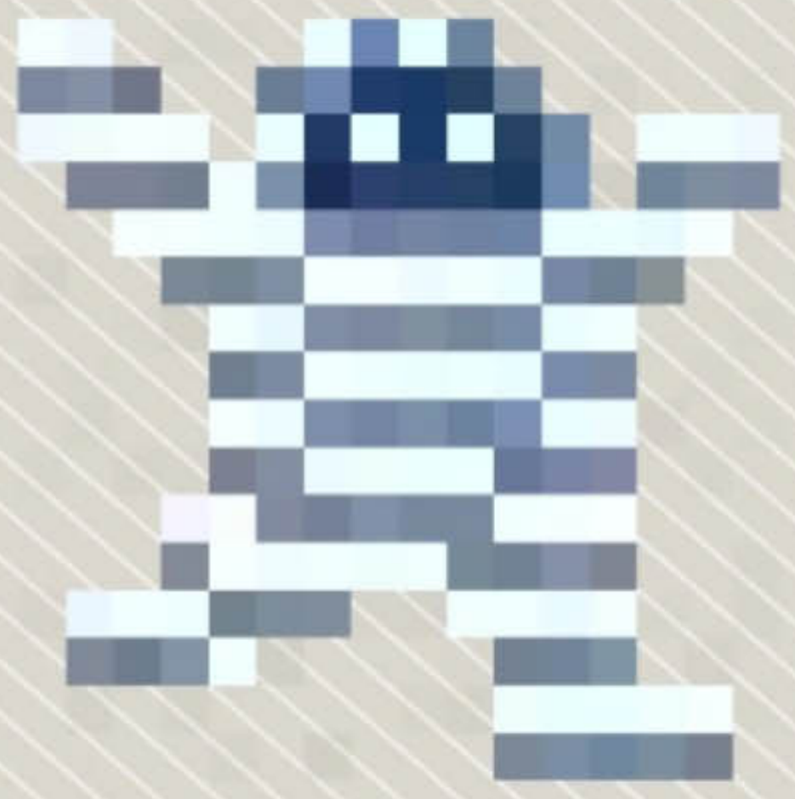
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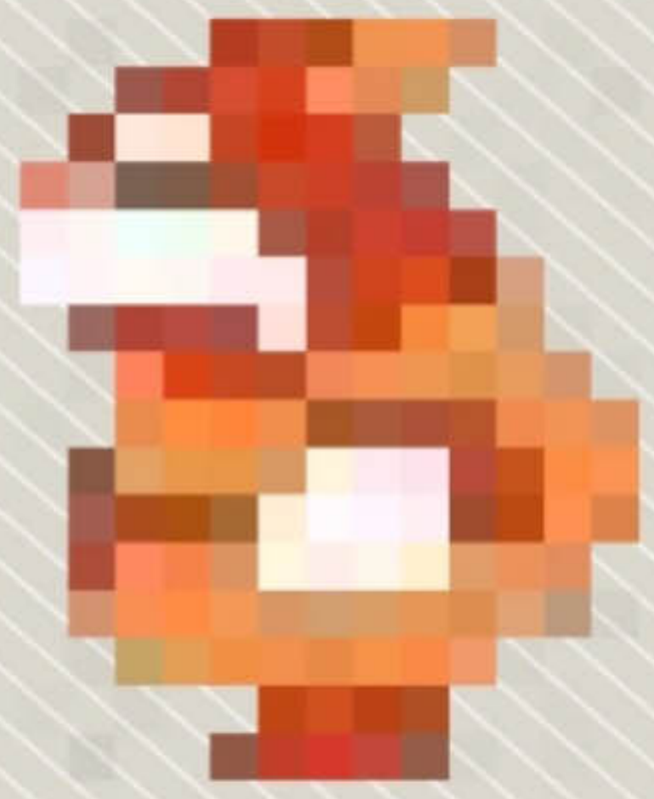
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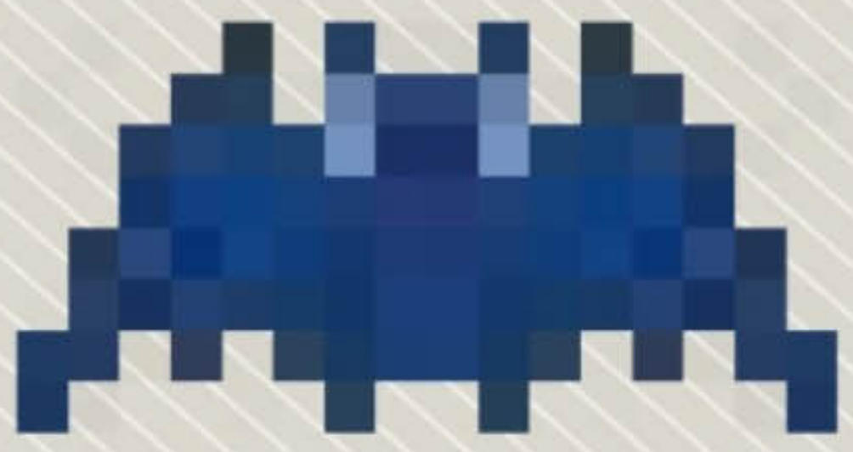
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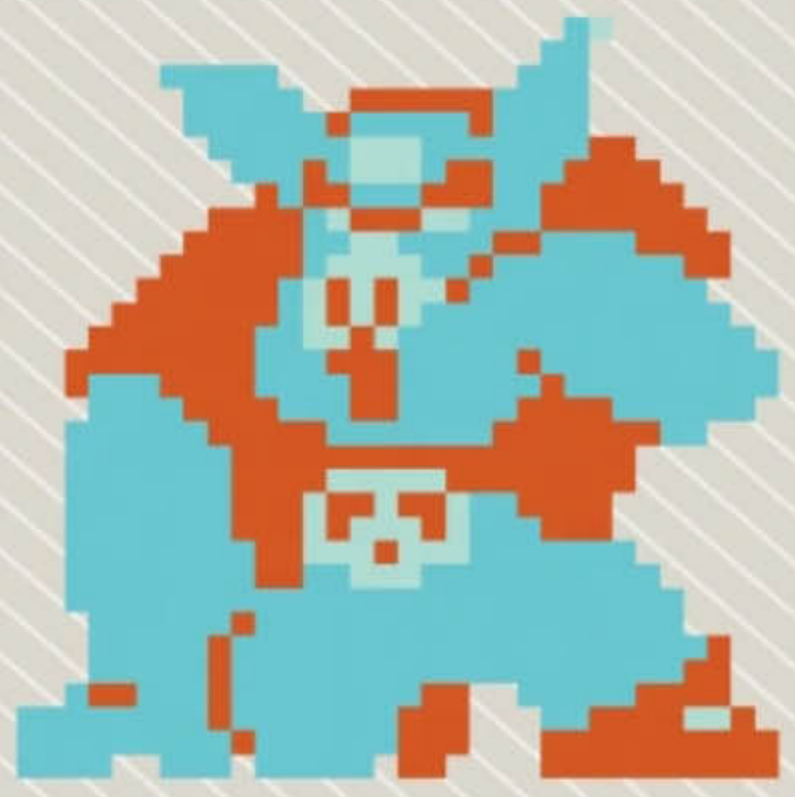
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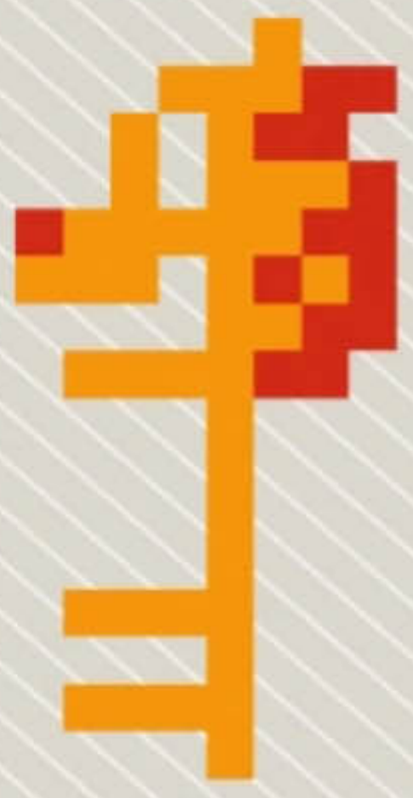
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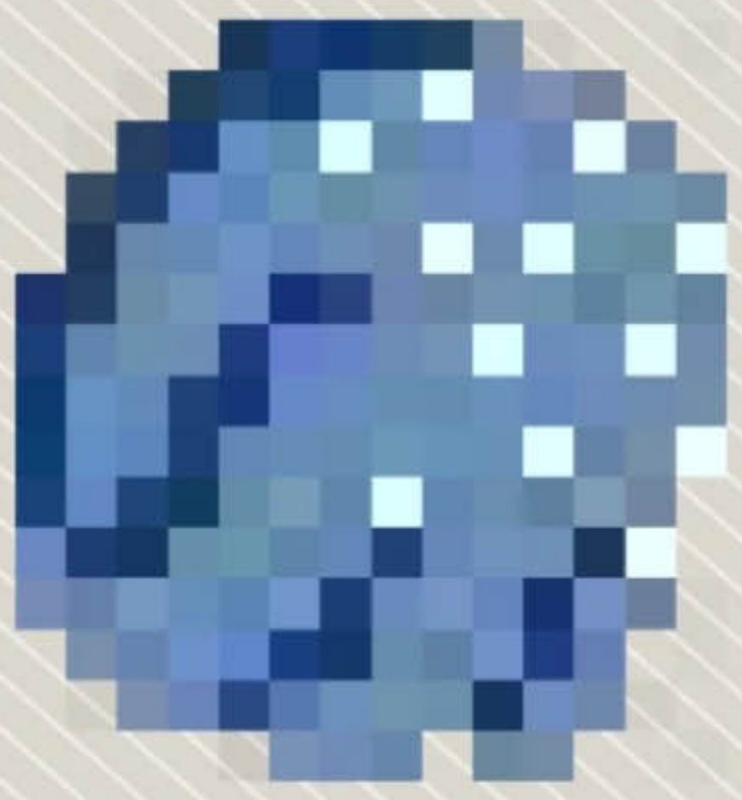
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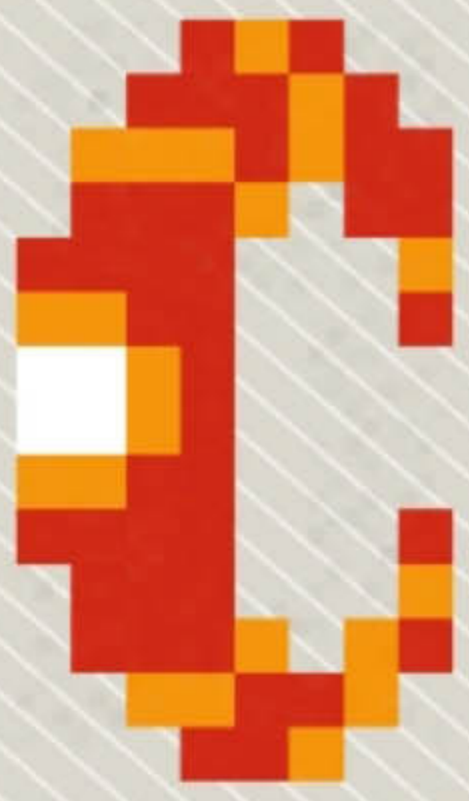
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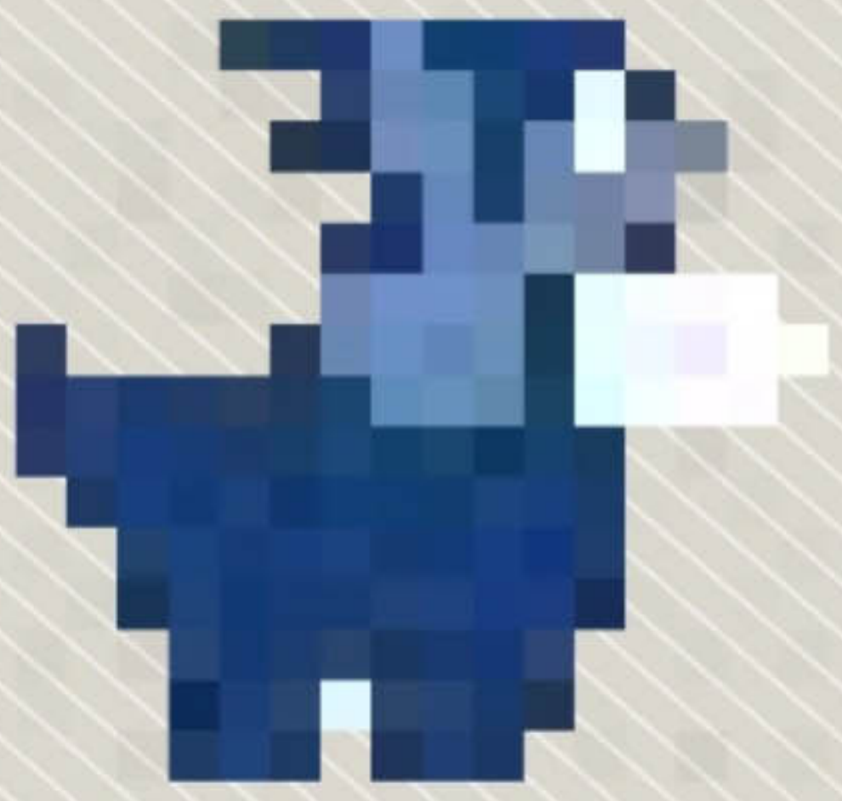
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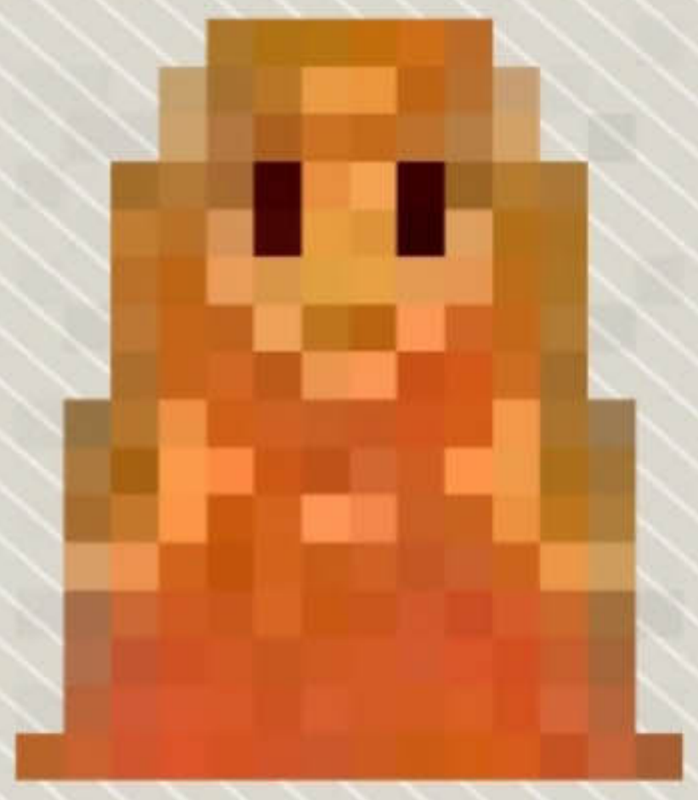
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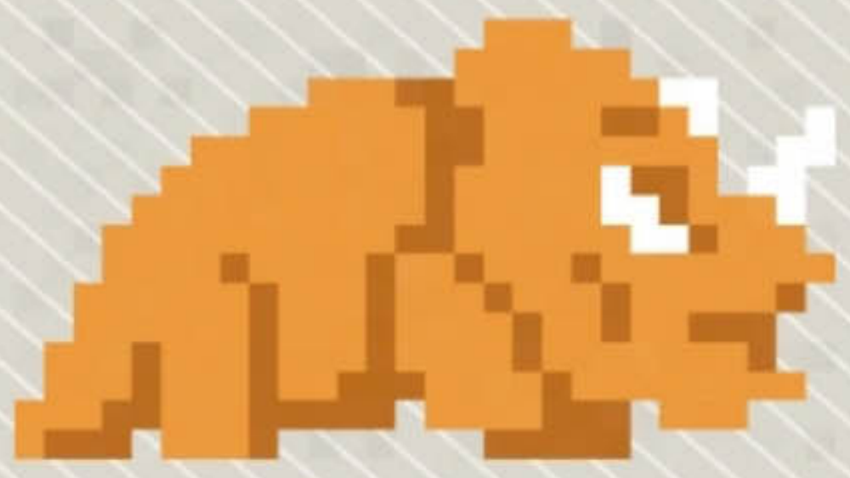
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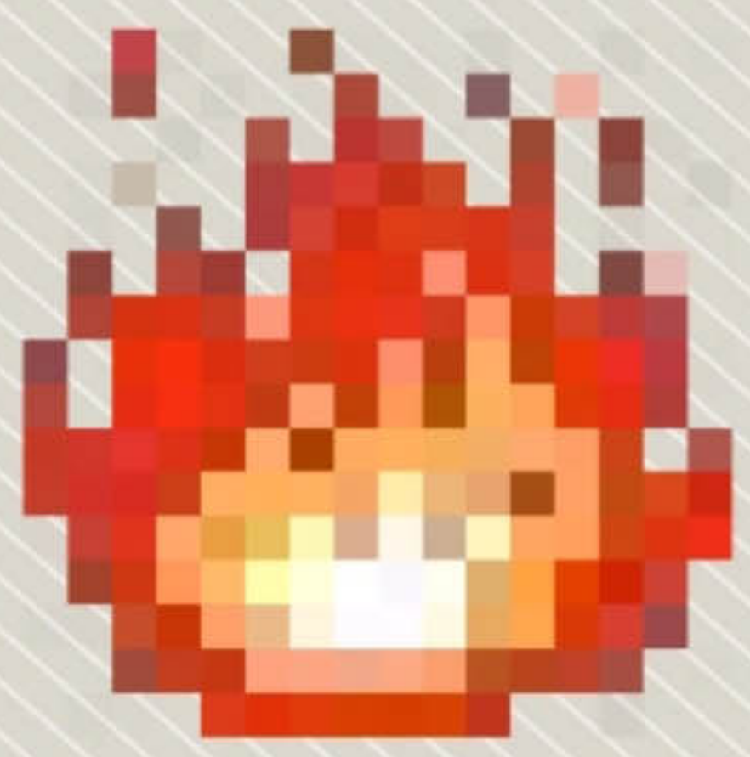
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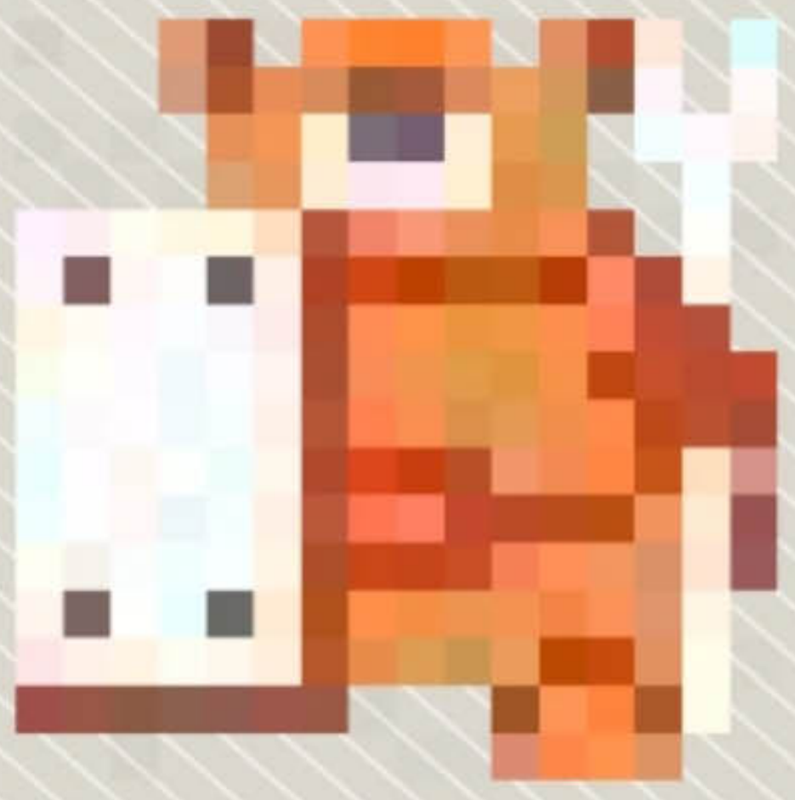
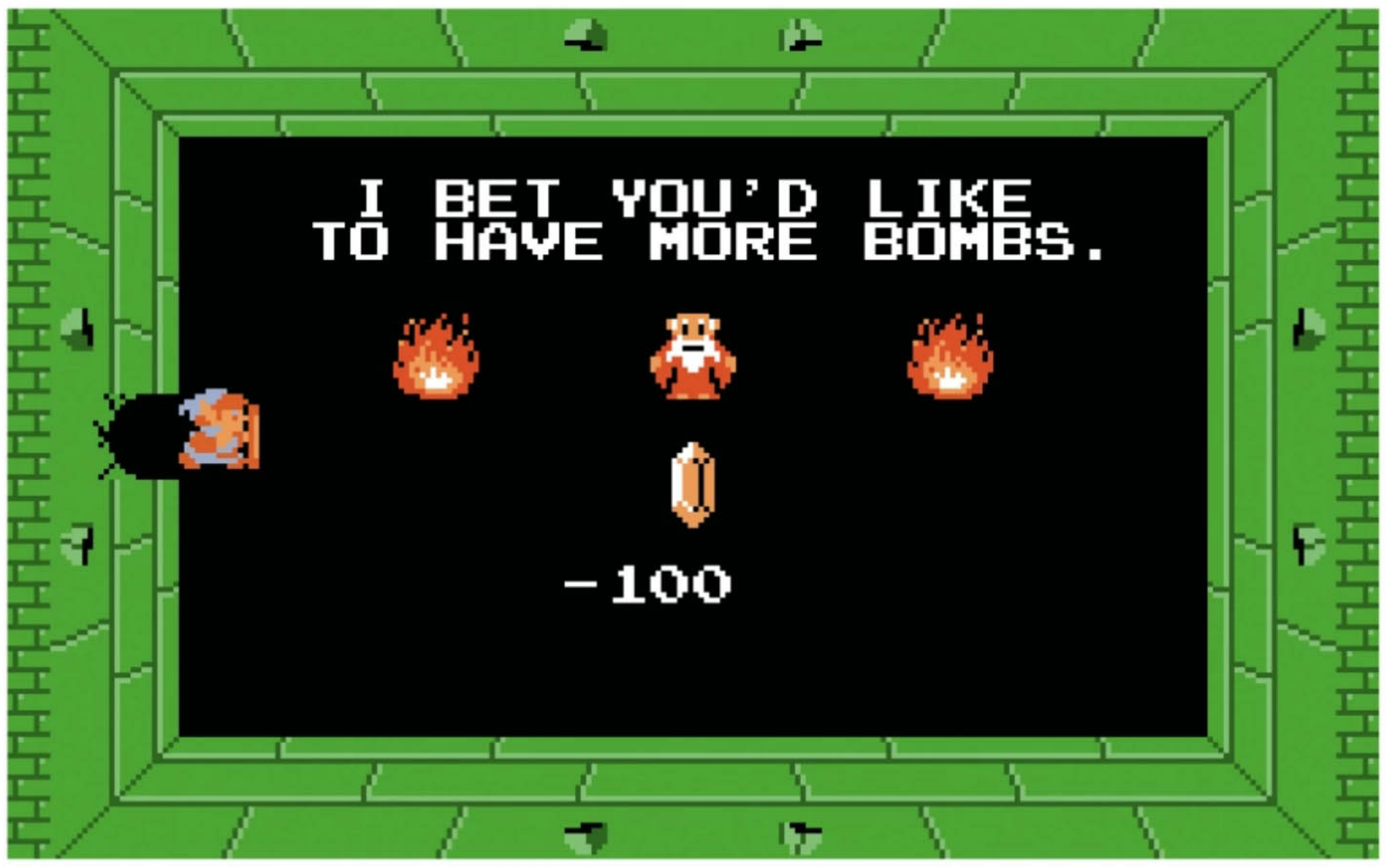

» Armos

on, of course, but *The Legend Of Zelda* was one of the first games to truly offer that kind of deep, long-term experience. And it did it very well indeed. So many early videogames can be credited as the first to do one thing or another, but *Zelda* did it all, establishing the rules of the modern adventure game and in such style that, alongside its sequels, it remains brilliantly playable a quarter of a century later, while Nintendo's competitors are still playing catch-up.

It's not just the tantalising nature of Hyrule's open world that makes *Zelda* so appealing. It's the way Link's ever-increasing inventory and abilities open up new routes through that world, ensuring that it rewards progress with a steady stream of surprises and discoveries right up to the end. There's the contrast between the freedom of the overworld and the tightly focused structure of the dungeons beneath the ground. There's the way each weapon Link acquires has more than one obvious use, forcing you to experiment and be creative with the way you play. And, of course, there's the wealth of secrets that permeate the world, not just rewarding the player but encouraging them to dig deeper, play harder and uncover hidden treasures that make you feel like the best player in the world. It's a deeply personal feature that makes you feel special for finding those secrets and personalises the experience, even though those secrets are, in reality, accessible to everyone.


I BET YOU'D LIKE
TO HAVE MORE BOMBS.
-100

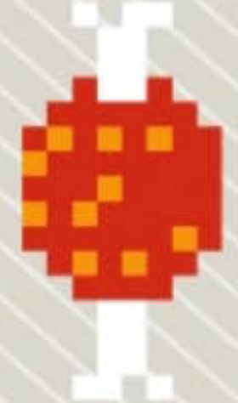
» [NES] More high explosives can never be a bad thing.

With 25 years under its belt, the *Zelda* series has since gone from strength to strength, and many people have a favourite entry in the series that isn't the first one. *A Link To The Past*, *Link's Awakening*, *Ocarina Of Time* and *Majora's Mask* could all legitimately lay claim to the title of Greatest *Zelda*, but there's something pure about that first game that sets it apart from its successors. Right from *Zelda II* onward, the series began to change. It still retained the core features of an overworld, a series of dungeons and an expanding bag of tricks, but it also lost something along the way. As the series has become increasingly preoccupied with telling a story, you could argue that it has also limited itself, weighing its opening moments down with unnecessary dialogue and lengthy tutorials that actually distance you from Link instead of doing the opposite.

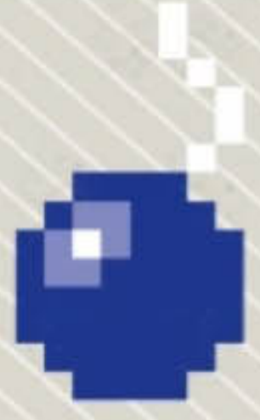
The Legend Of Zelda's real brilliance is that it has the confidence to just drop you into its world and leaves you to explore for yourself, experimenting with its mysteries and discovering secrets without any real hand-holding. Instead of simply telling you a story, it allows you to live the story; its events are driven by your decisions and actions. It feels unique, it rewards those who jump in at the deep end to go see what they can find, and it's a quality that the *Zelda* series would do well to recapture.

Power-ups

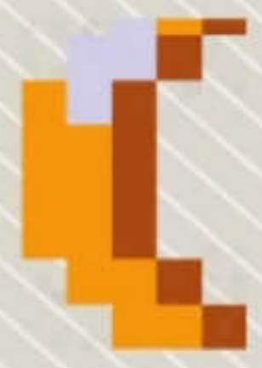
Some of The Legend Of Zelda's pick-ups have endured throughout the series' history, while it never quite happened for others…



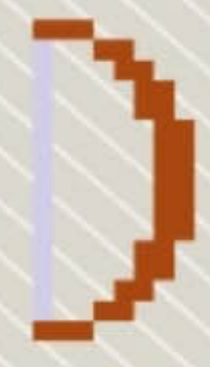
»Bait
This meat is bought from a shop and used to feed any Goriyas that block your path.



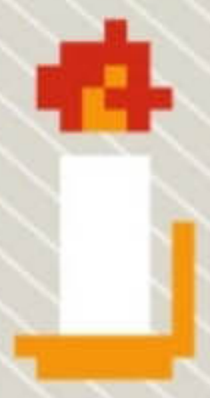
»Bombs
The bomb can be used to hurt just about any enemy but can also be used to open secret entrances.



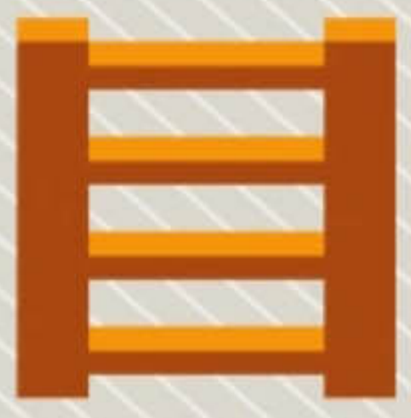
»Boomerang
The boomerang has two distinct uses. One violent to damage enemies; the other practical, as it can retrieve distant objects.



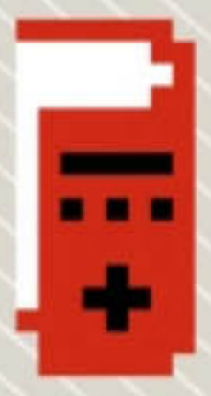
»Bow
The bow is the only thing that can kill Ganon, at least once you've acquired the silver arrows for it.



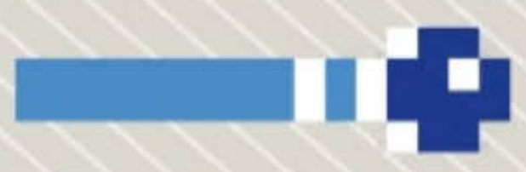
»Candle
This can be used to light your way, but it can also be used to burn bushes, sometimes revealing secrets.



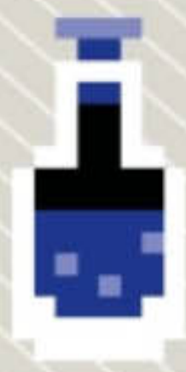
»Ladder
This item allows you to cross small sections of river to take short cuts and is essential for some dungeons.



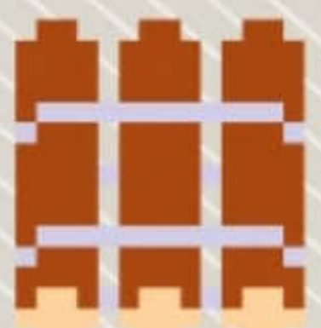
»Magic Book
An optional item that upgrades the wand so that it can shoot fireballs, making candles redundant.



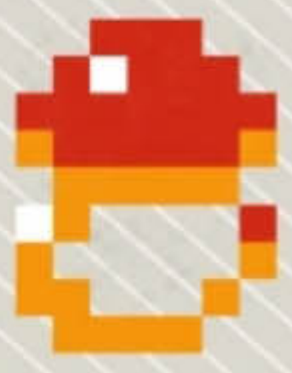
»Magic Wand
It's a wand! What more do we have to tell you? It uses your magic energy to shoot beams.



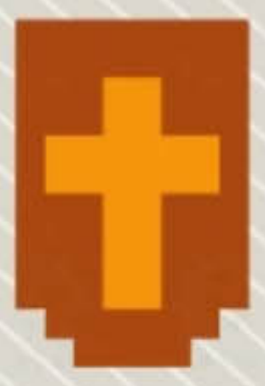
»Potions
Potions come in two varieties: blue and red. Blue restores some of your life while the red replenishes it all.



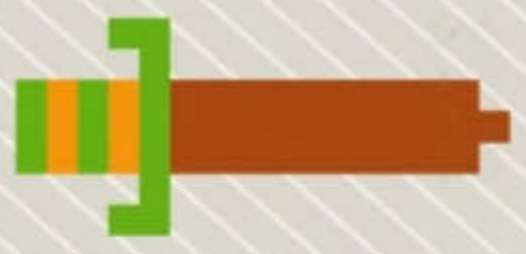
»Raft
Allows Link to get around the waterways of Hyrule. He can embark or disembark the raft at any dock.



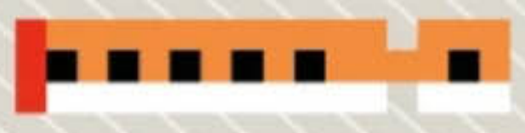
»Rings
These, much like every other magic item, can be found in two colours. Each increases Link's strength.



»Shield
The wooden shield just repels ordinary attacks. The magic shield, however, can block fireballs.



»Swords
There are three swords – Wooden, White and Magical – each one more powerful than the last.



»Whistle
A single-use item that is essential for beating Digdogger, the boss of the fifth dungeon.

Critical Reception

What the gaming press thought…

21 JULY 1987
COMPUTER + VIDEO GAMES
INDIANA JONES
FREE GIANT POSTER!
WIN A GOBOT/WIN AL CAPONE'S MACHINE-GUN
AMIGA SPECIAL/WIN 500 CODEMASTERS GAMES!

> "The Legend Of Zelda is a massive arcade adventure packed full of dragons, imprisoned princesses, traps and pitfalls"
>
> - COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES, 1987

Twin Galaxies High Scores

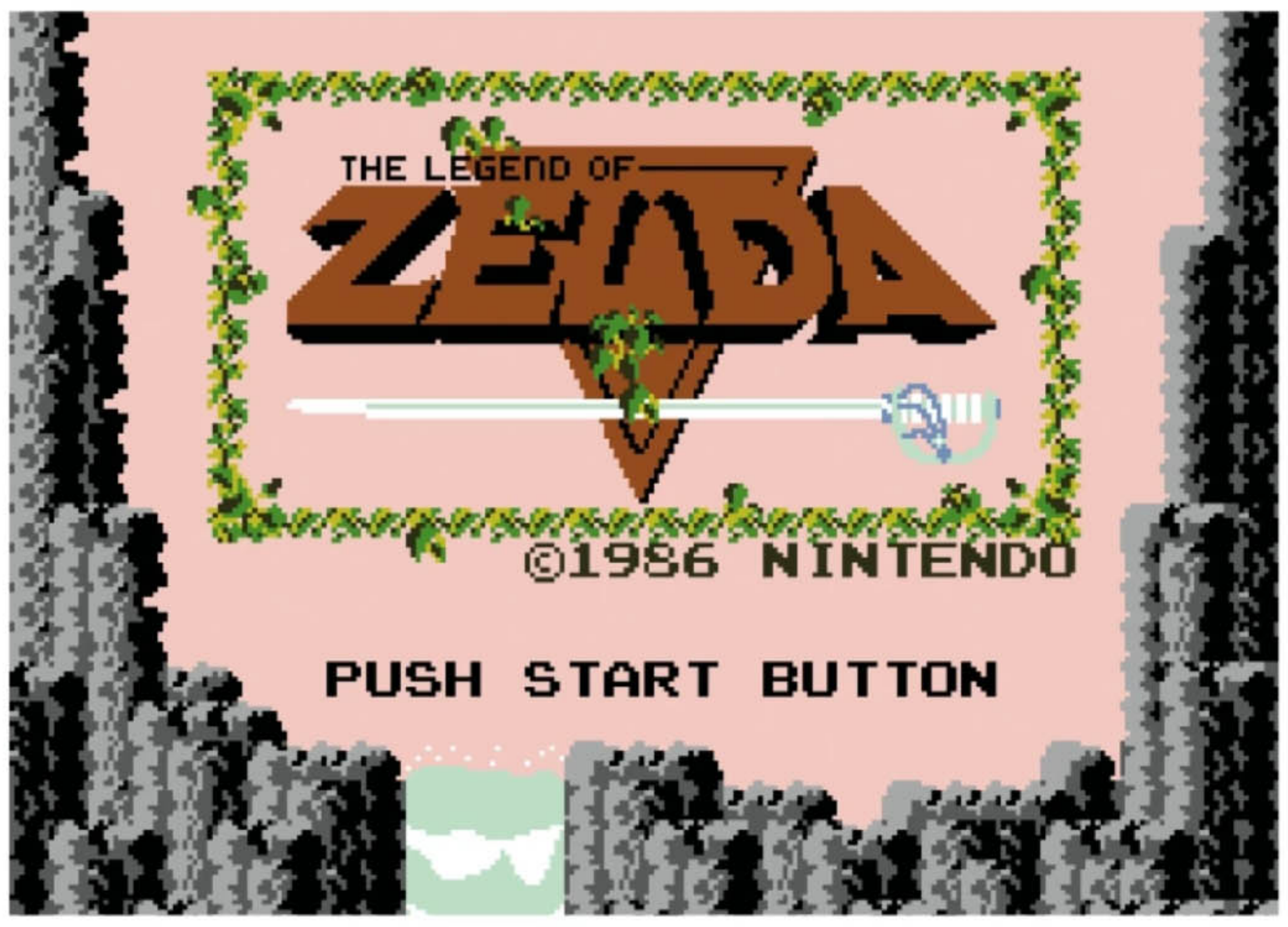
SPEED RUN (QUEST 1)
- **NAME:** RODRIGO LOPES
- **TIME:** 00:31:37

SPEED RUN (QUEST 2)
- **NAME:** RODRIGO LOPES
- **TIME:** 00:39:59

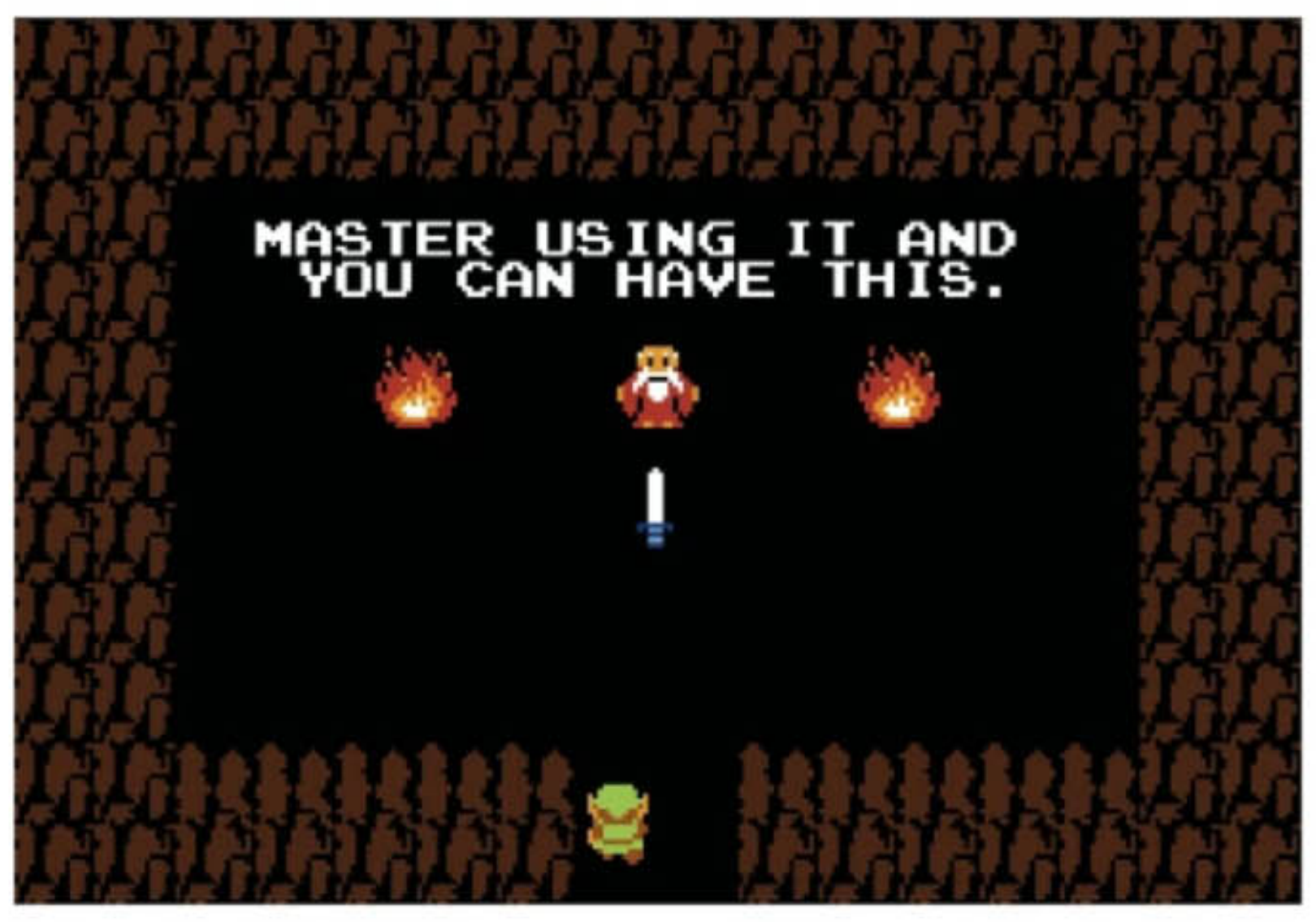
EXTREME CHALLENGE
(COMPLETE GAME WITHOUT SWORD, DON'T KILL OVERWORLD ENEMIES)
- **NAME:** MARLON D MORROW
- **COMPLETION:** 100%

Memorable Moments

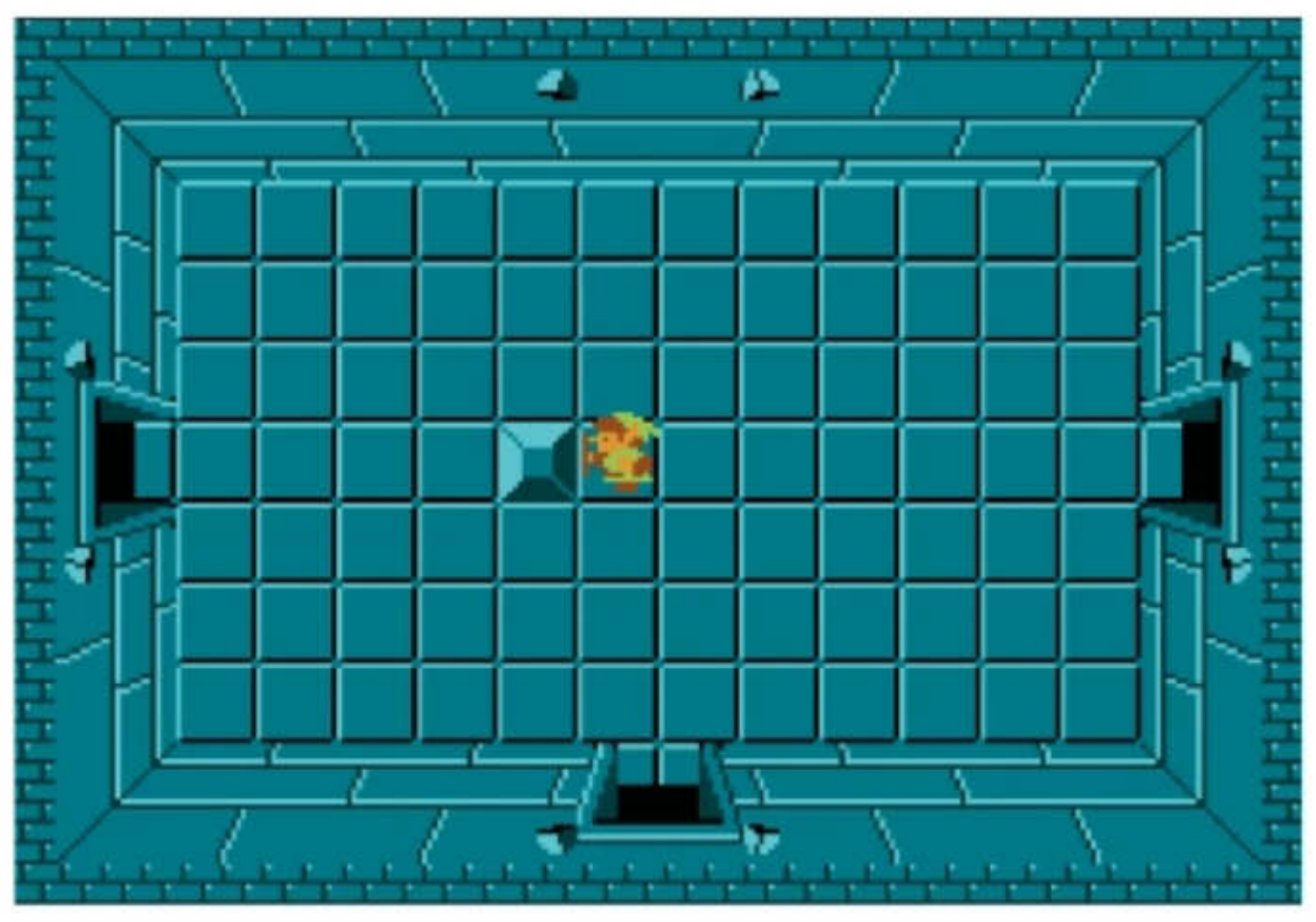
We present the best bits of the best NES game Nintendo ever made



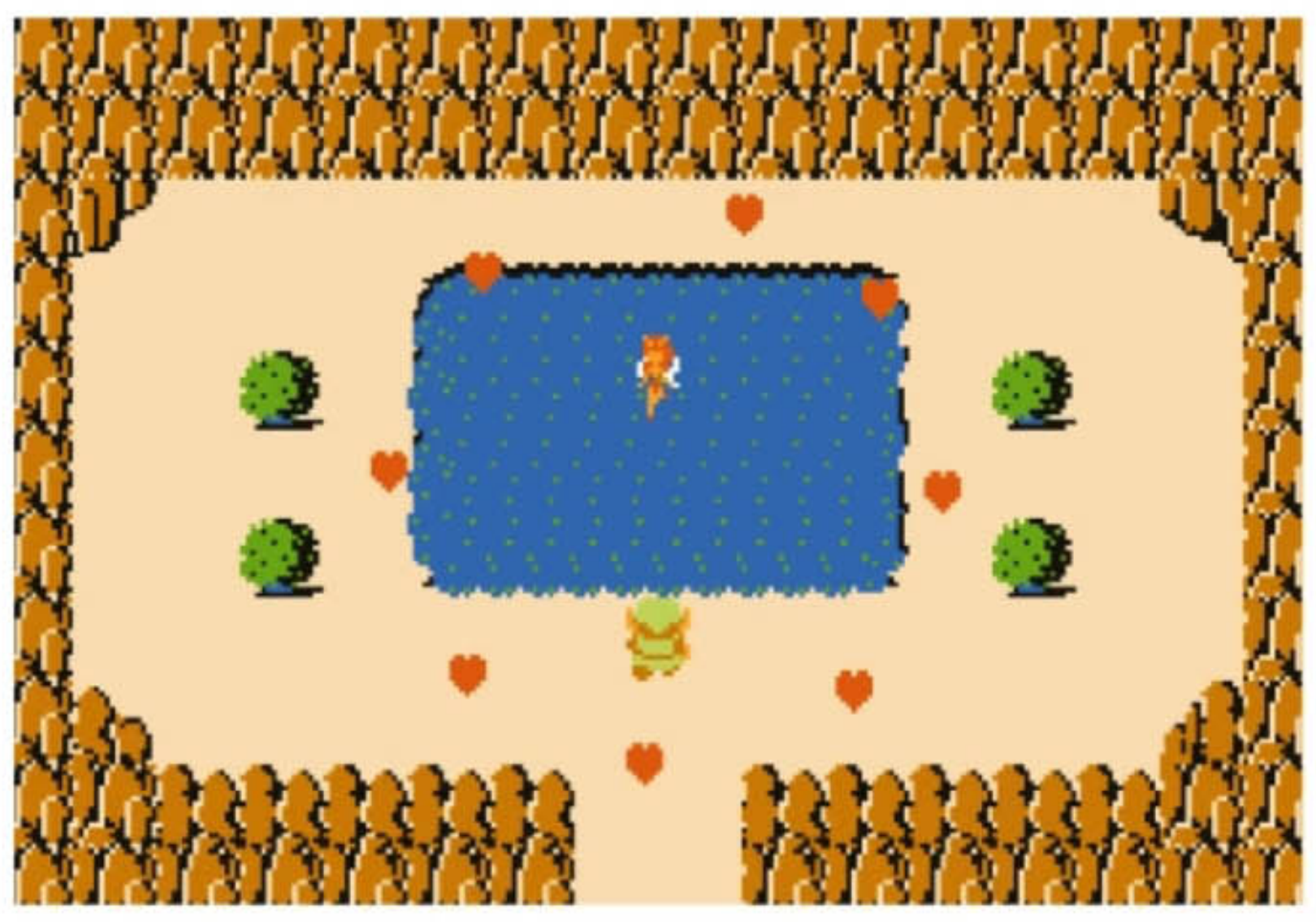
Signature tune
The now-iconic *Zelda* theme slowly plays and builds up speed as a waterfall pours down the title screen. Koji Kondo's composition is yet another classic, leading to his involvement in every game in the series up until *Ocarina Of Time*.


MASTER USING IT AND YOU CAN HAVE THIS.

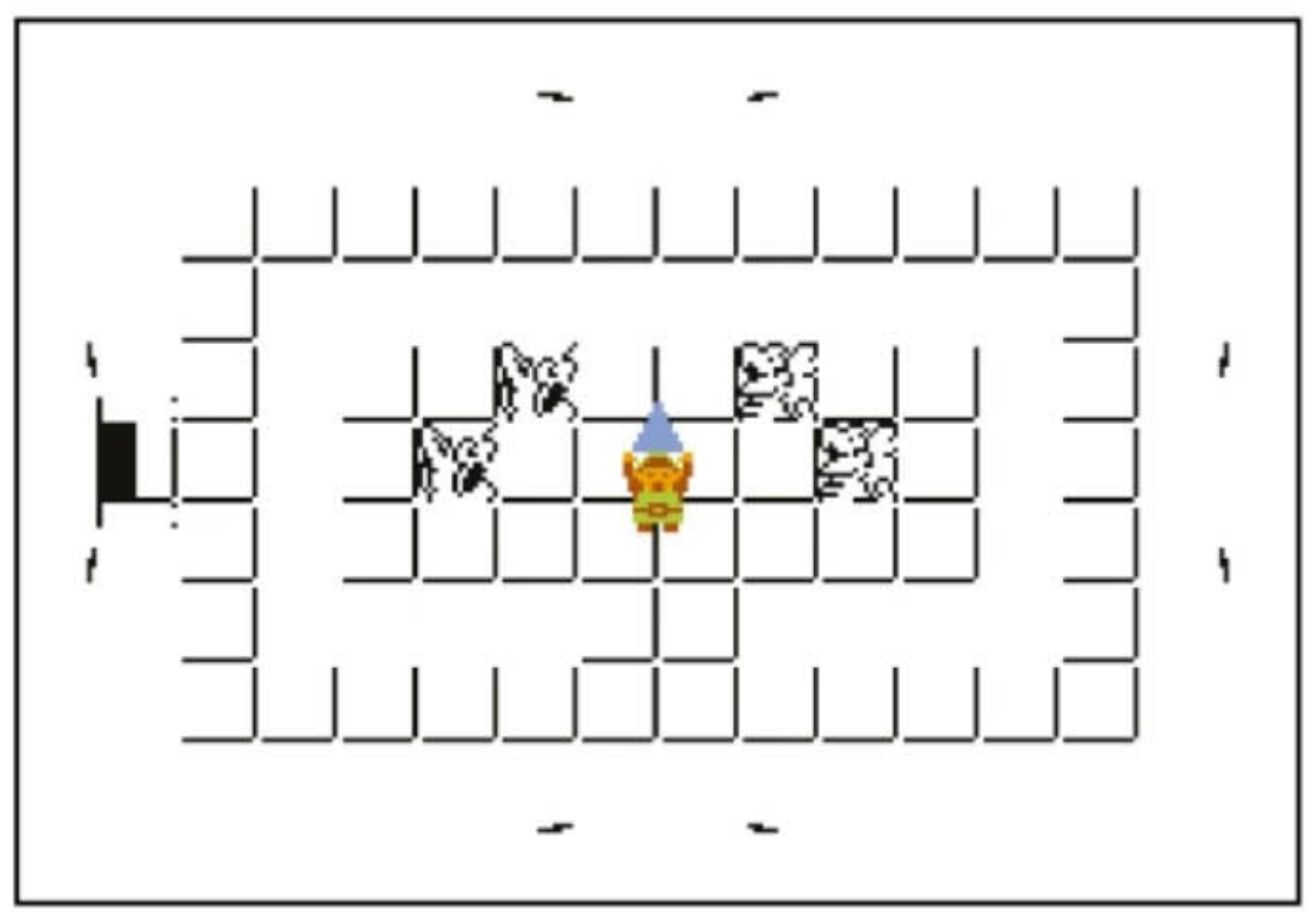
Good advice
One of the few pieces of dialogue is also the most memorable. Though you can play the whole game without the sword, the old man's advice is right. You'll do much better with it, and what's a *Zelda* game without a sword?



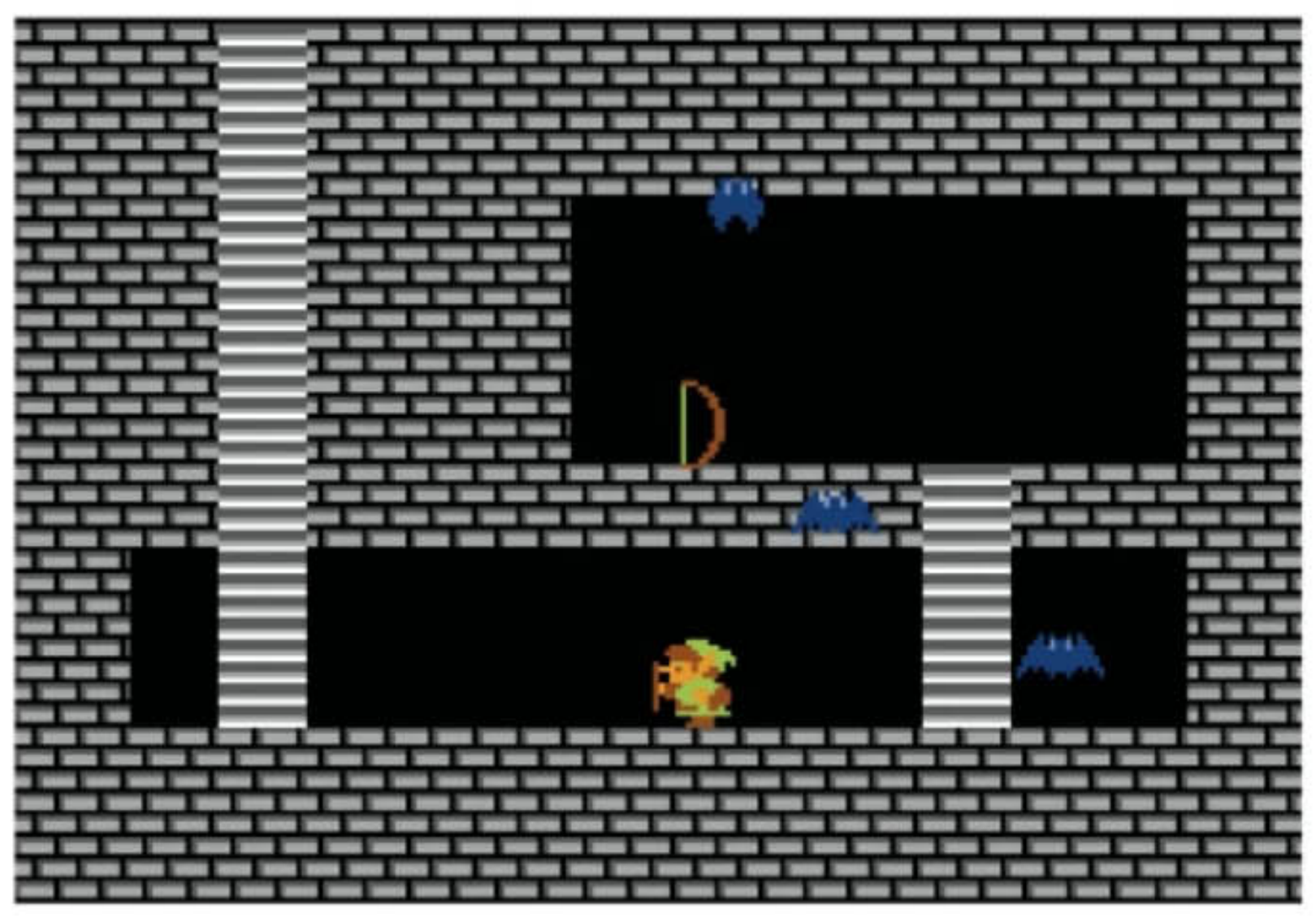
Secret exit
Finding secrets is one of *Zelda*'s greatest pleasures, not to mention one of its inspirations, and here's one of the earliest. A door without a keyhole is opened by pushing a seemingly ordinary block to the left.



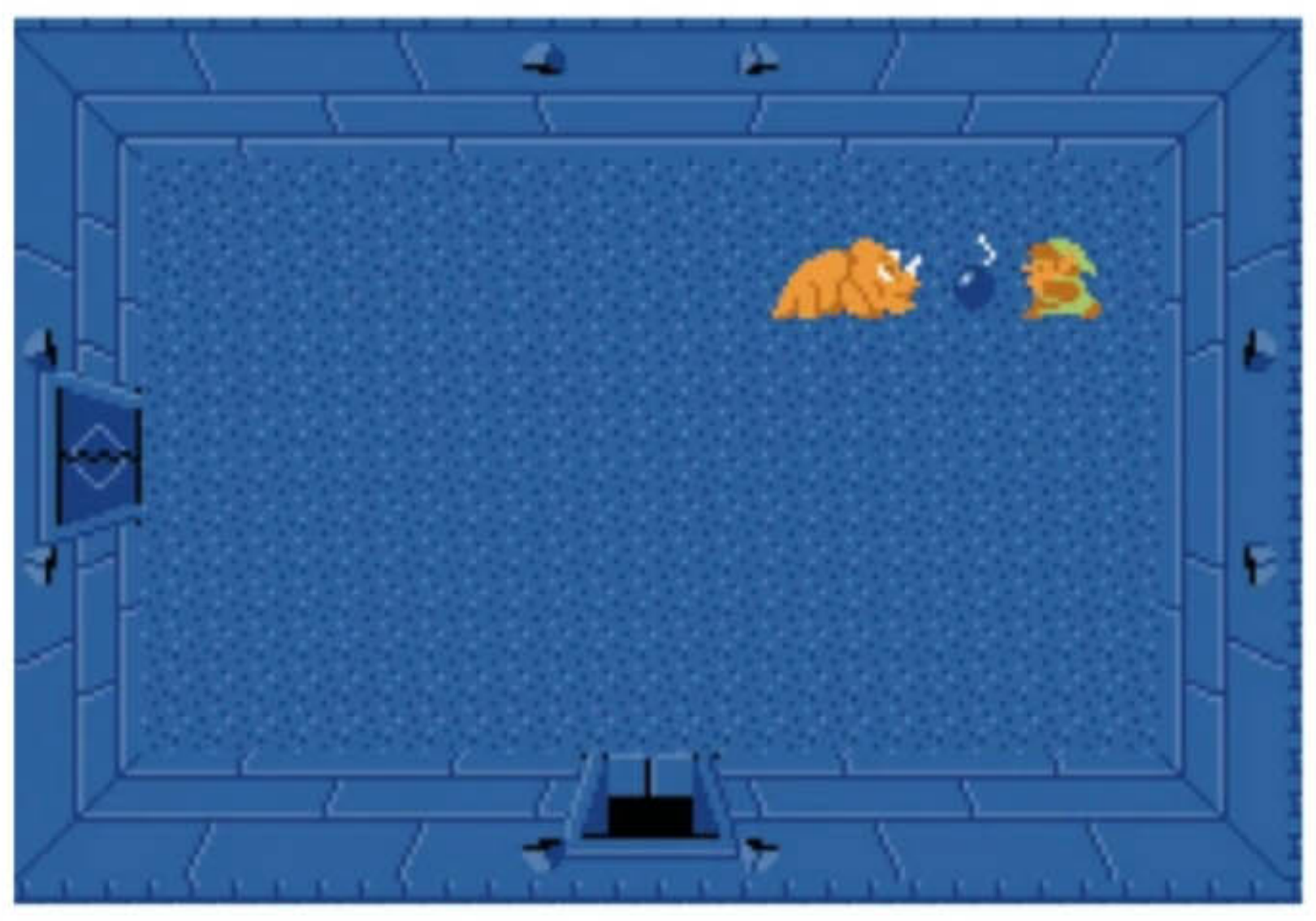
Fairy godmother
Find an enclosed pool and a fairy will pop out and rejuvenate Link's health with a swirl of hearts. It's another feature that has cropped up time and again through the series, with the fairies' abilities and applications expanding.



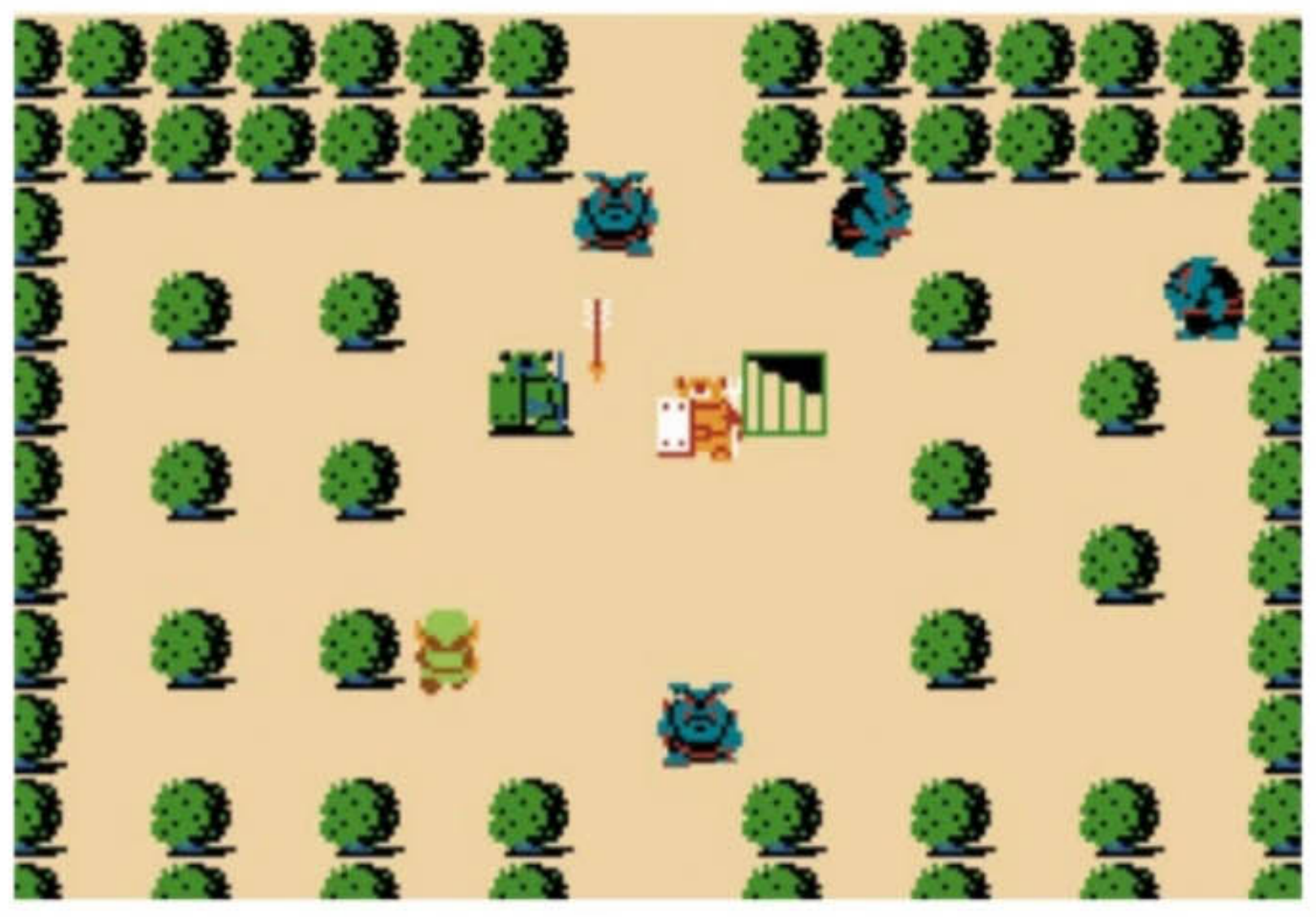
Triforce get!
Link finds his first piece of the Triforce and holds it above his head in a way that has now become an identifiable characteristic of the little elf boy. The Triforces of Wisdom and Power appear in the original, with Courage debuting in the next.



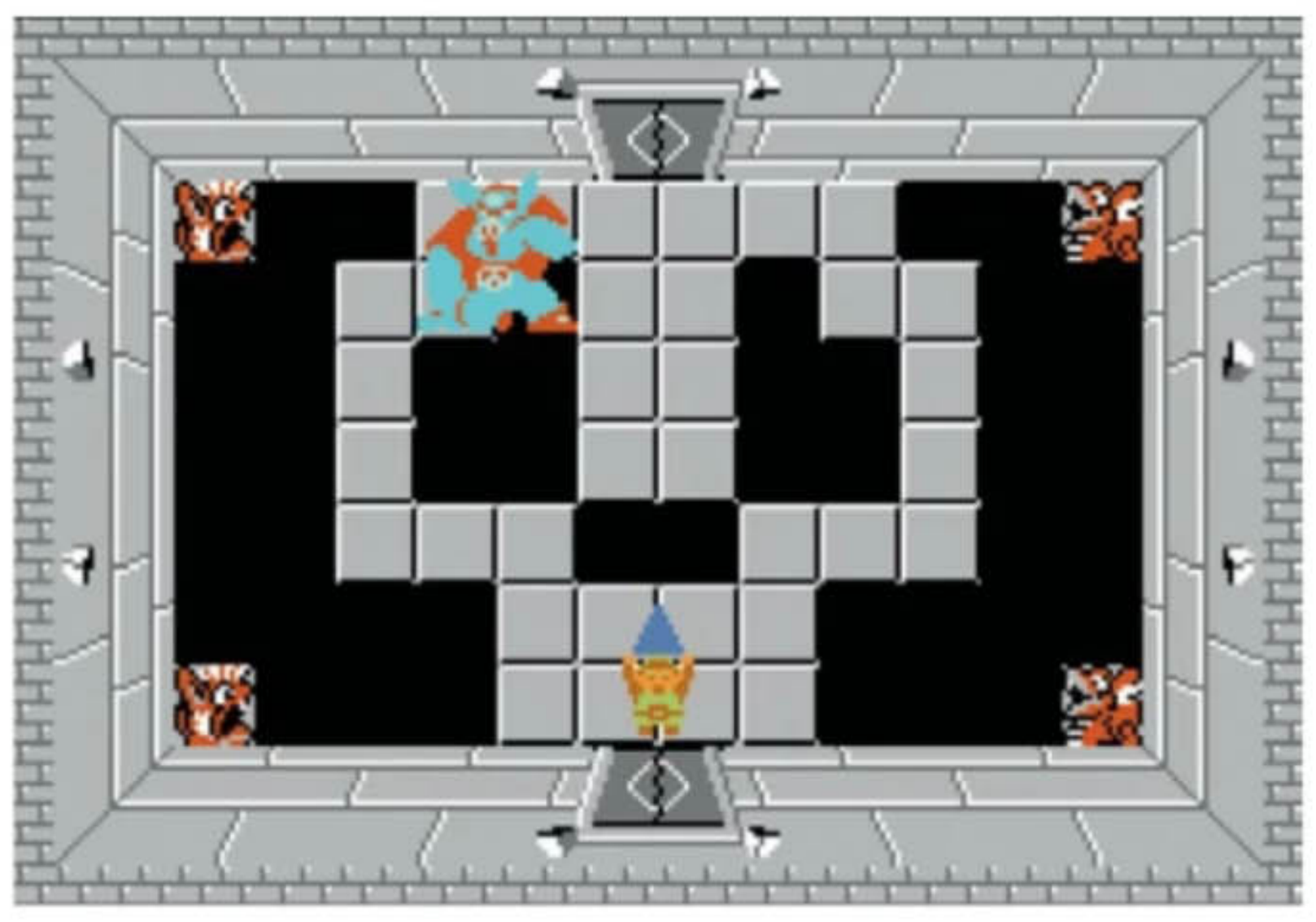
Side story
Some dungeon screens switch perspective to a side view, a trick that was adopted wholesale for *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link* and would return for some brief sequences in the Game Boy's *Link's Awakening*.



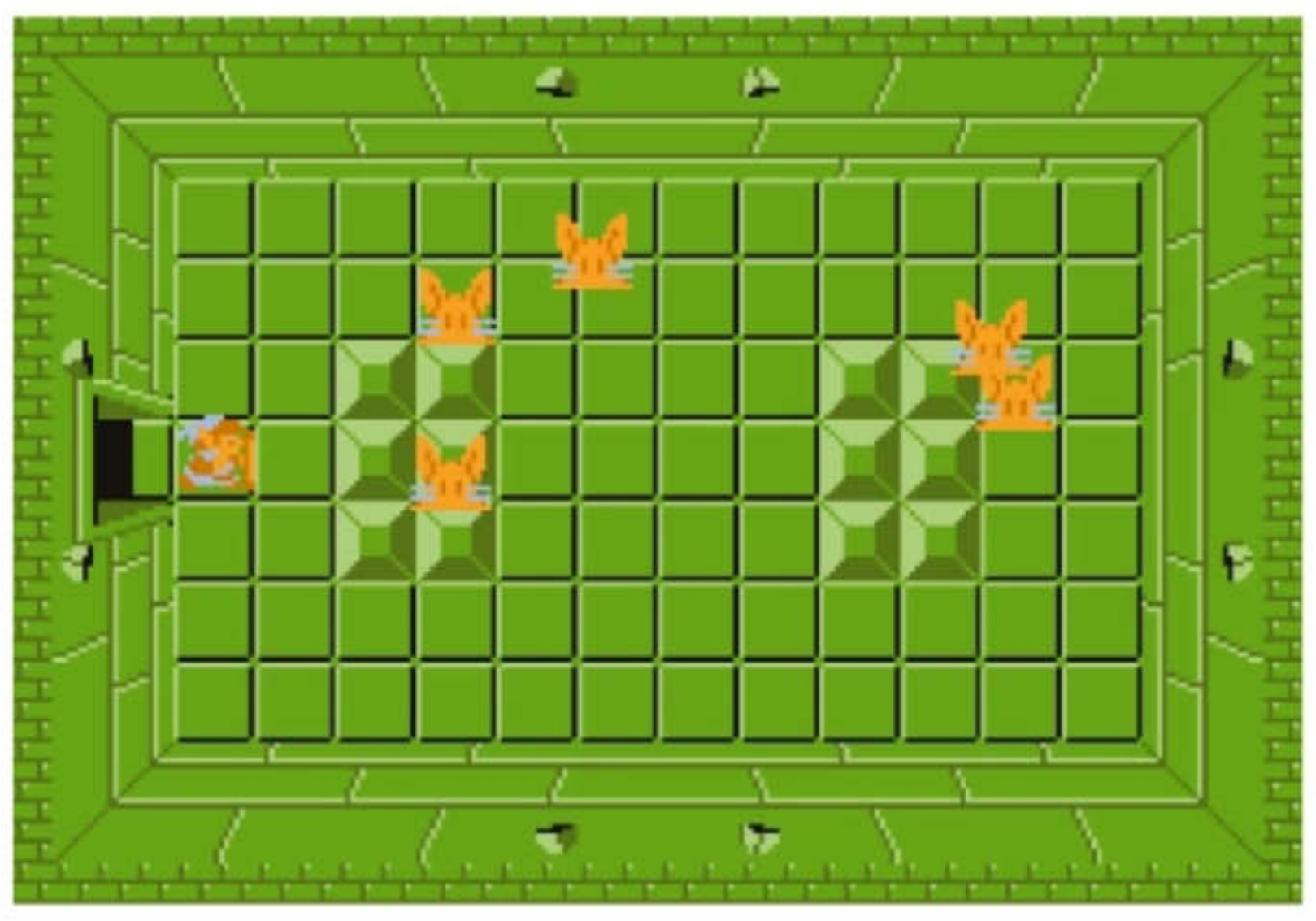
Hard to swallow
The brilliant Dodongo boss is defeated by getting him to eat and swallow a bomb, causing him some nasty indigestion when it explodes in his belly. A similar boss, King Dodongo, became an iconic sequence in *Ocarina Of Time*.



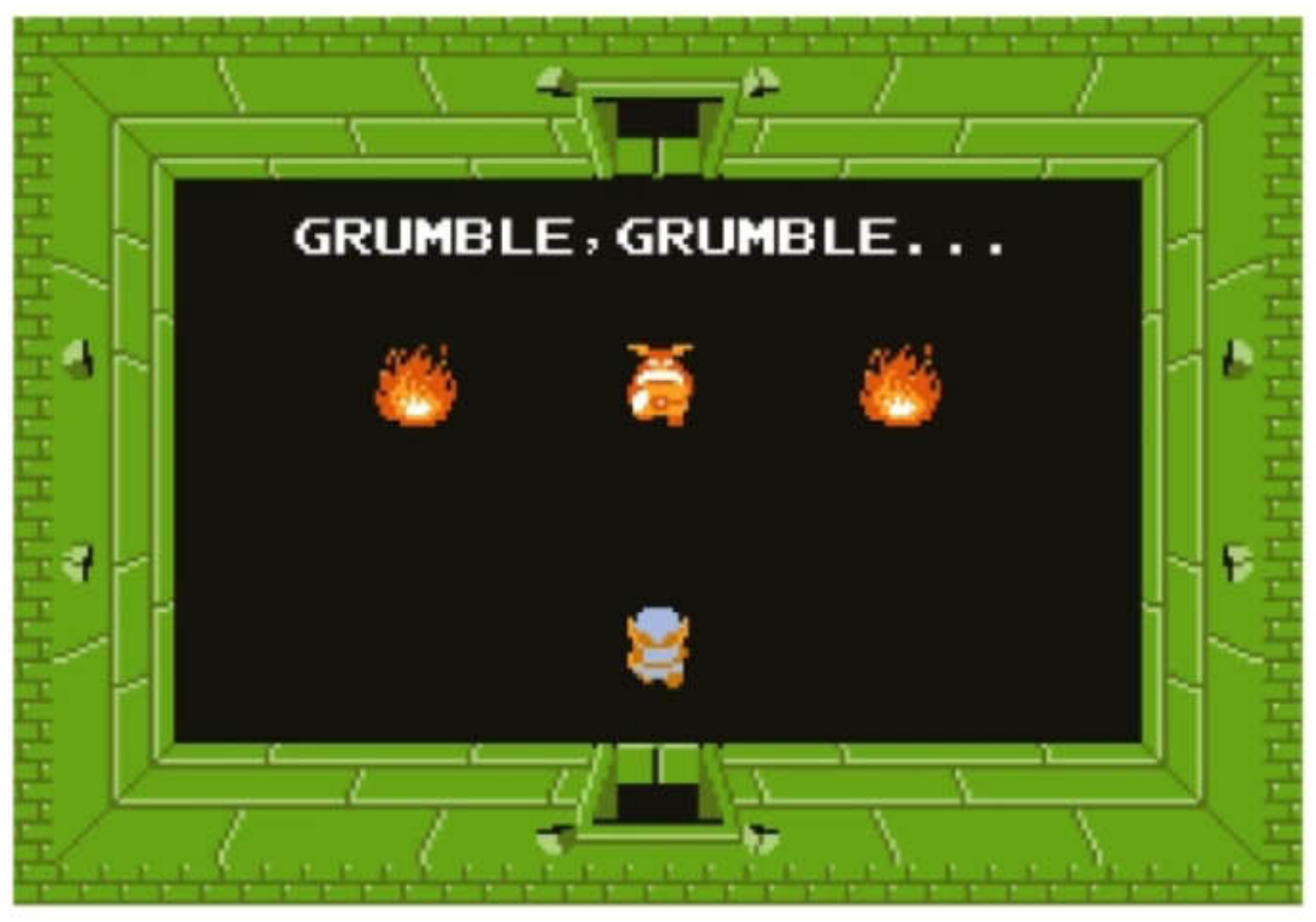
Hidden stairs
Another great secret. Touch a statue and it will come to life to attack you. Some statues stand over stairways that lead to secret underground rooms, tempting players to engage them in combat in the hope of some reward.



Boss hog
The final showdown with Ganon reveals him to be some kind of grotesque demon pig, much more monstrous than the human reinterpretation in *Ocarina Of Time*. Recent games tend to give him a hideous second form.

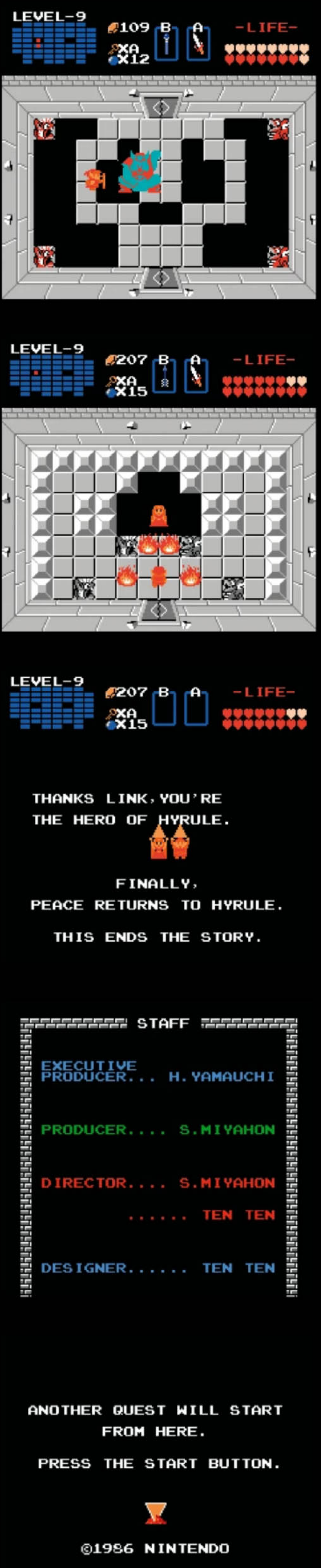


Loud noises!
In the Japanese release of *Zelda* you can shout into the Famicom microphone to hurt Pols Voice enemies. But you can't in the NES release. So in Japan it's a memorable moment. Over here it's barely even a regular moment.


GRUMBLE, GRUMBLE...

Feeding time
This Goriya isn't having a moan; it's actually his stomach rumbling. Feed him the meat and he'll let you pass. The first time a *Zelda* enemy defies expectations of simply being sword fodder and not the last.

Zelda's ending is fairly typical for adventure games, until it reveals that there's a whole new quest to play through



THANKS LINK, YOU'RE THE HERO OF HYRULE.

FINALLY, PEACE RETURNS TO HYRULE.

THIS ENDS THE STORY.

STAFF

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER... H.YAMAUCHI

PRODUCER.... S.MIYAHON

DIRECTOR.... S.MIYAHON

...... TEN TEN

DESIGNER...... TEN TEN

ANOTHER QUEST WILL START FROM HERE.

PRESS THE START BUTTON.

©1986 NINTENDO

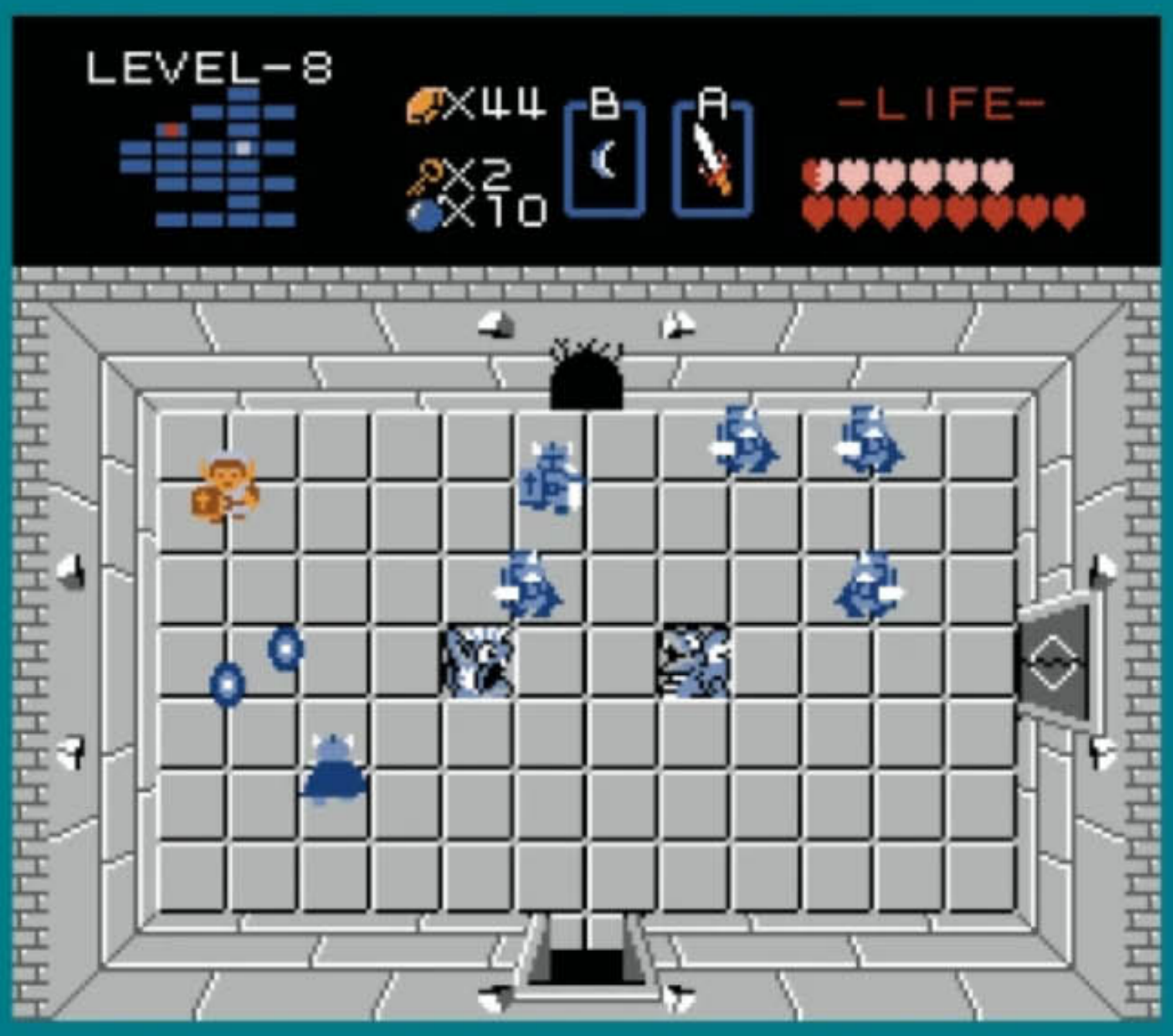
The Versions Of Zelda

There have been many more versions of the original Legend Of Zelda than you probably think. Here's every one and the differences between them

BUY SOMETHIN' WILL YA!
130
20

PROTOTYPE (1985, estimated)

A prototype version of the original Famicom Disk game, only recently discovered in late 2010. The prototype differs from the real thing in several ways, most notably that it's a lot easier thanks to a higher distribution of rupees and slightly different enemy arrangements. The disk image is available to download from **www.lostlevels.org**.


LEVEL-8
X44
X2
X10
B
A
-LIFE-

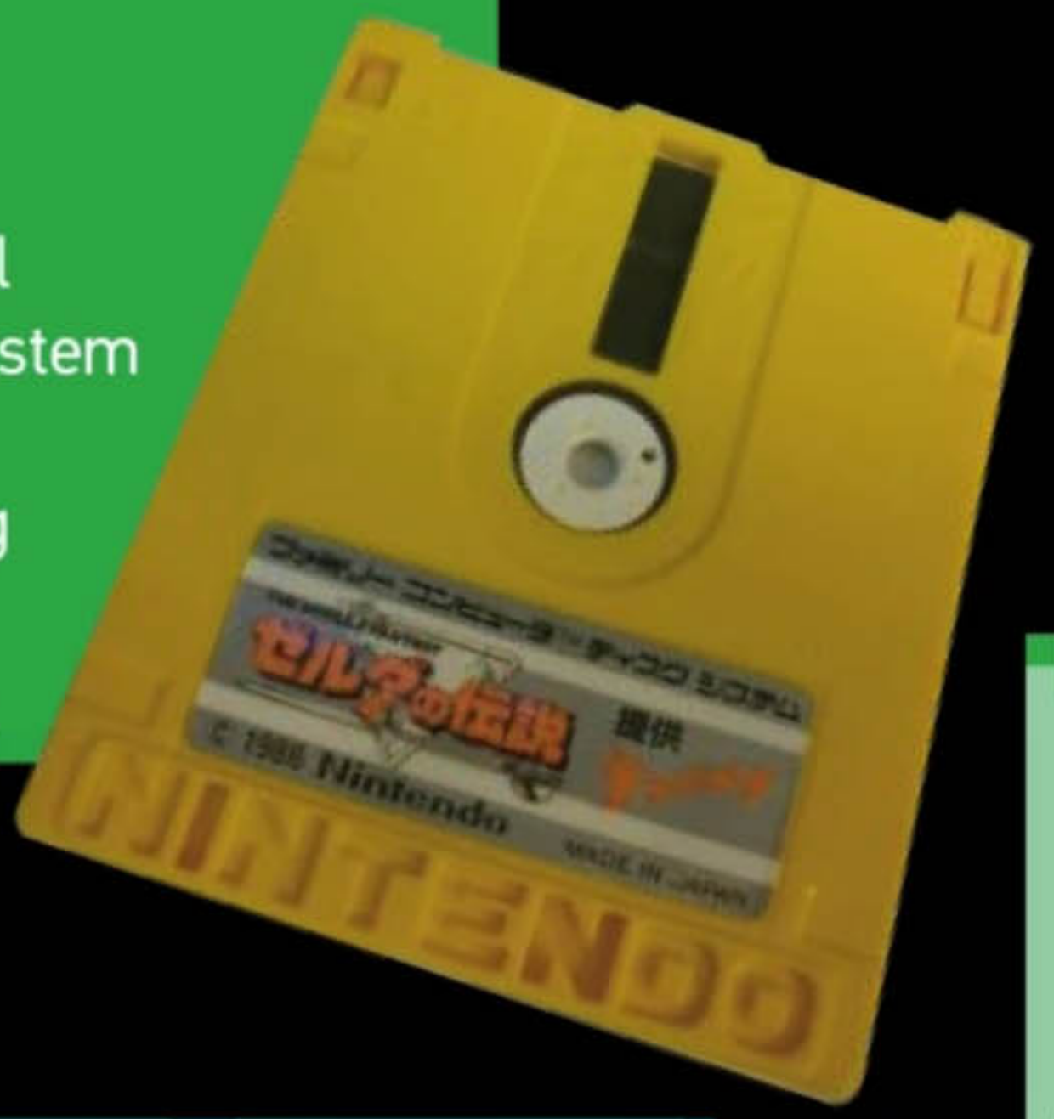
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM (1986)

The first official release of the game was titled *The Hyrule Fantasy: Zelda No Densetsu* and was a launch title for the Famicom Disk System. This release used the extra capabilities in the FDS to play sounds not present in the NES cartridge version. It also used the microphone built in to the second controller of the Famicom. Blowing into it was a secret way to kill the sound-sensitive Pols Voice enemy, which was technically impossible on the standard NES.

THE HYRULE FANTASY
ゼルダの伝説
FMC-ZEL
Nintendo

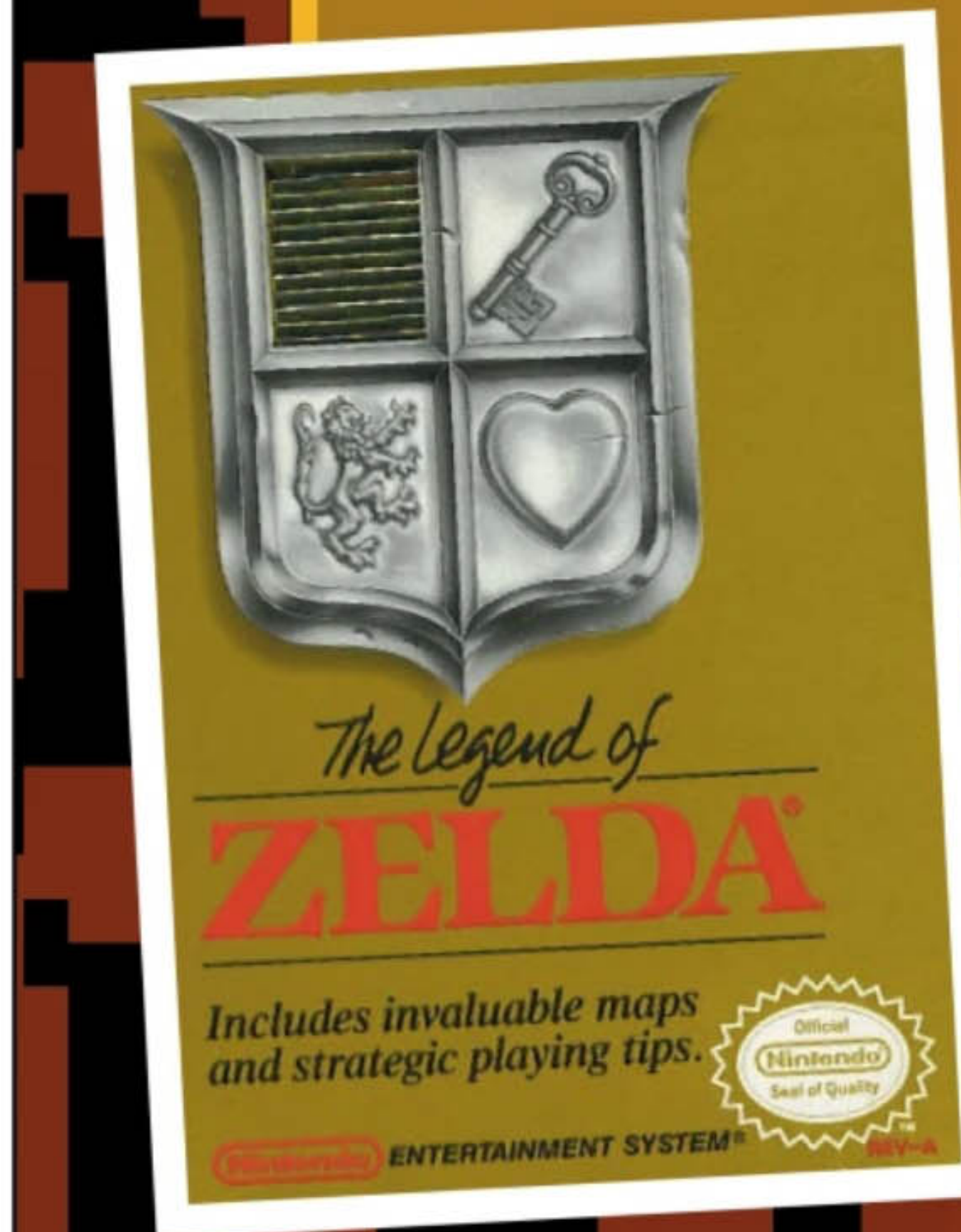
ZELDA NO DENSETSU: TEIKYOU CHARUMERA (1986)

Made to promote Myojo Foods' charumera noodles, this special release of the Famicom Disk System game is identified by a different label design and is considered a rare Famicom collector's item, selling for around £180 in Japanese retro stores.


ゼルダの伝説
© 1986 Nintendo
MADE IN JAPAN
NINTENDO

NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM (1987)

As well as translating the game into English, the US and European release of *The Legend Of Zelda* was the first to arrive on cartridge. Though the Famicom Disk System had been introduced to reduce the cost of ROMs, the add-on never made it outside Japan so Nintendo used a new type of chip. The MMC1 (Memory Management Controller) used bank-switching to make bigger games possible and allowed *The Legend Of Zelda* to be released worldwide. And boy did Nintendo milk it, releasing the game on a special gold cartridge and cutting a window into the packaging so that everyone could see for themselves. Classy.


The Legend of
ZELDA
Includes invaluable maps and strategic playing tips.
Official Nintendo Seal of Quality
Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

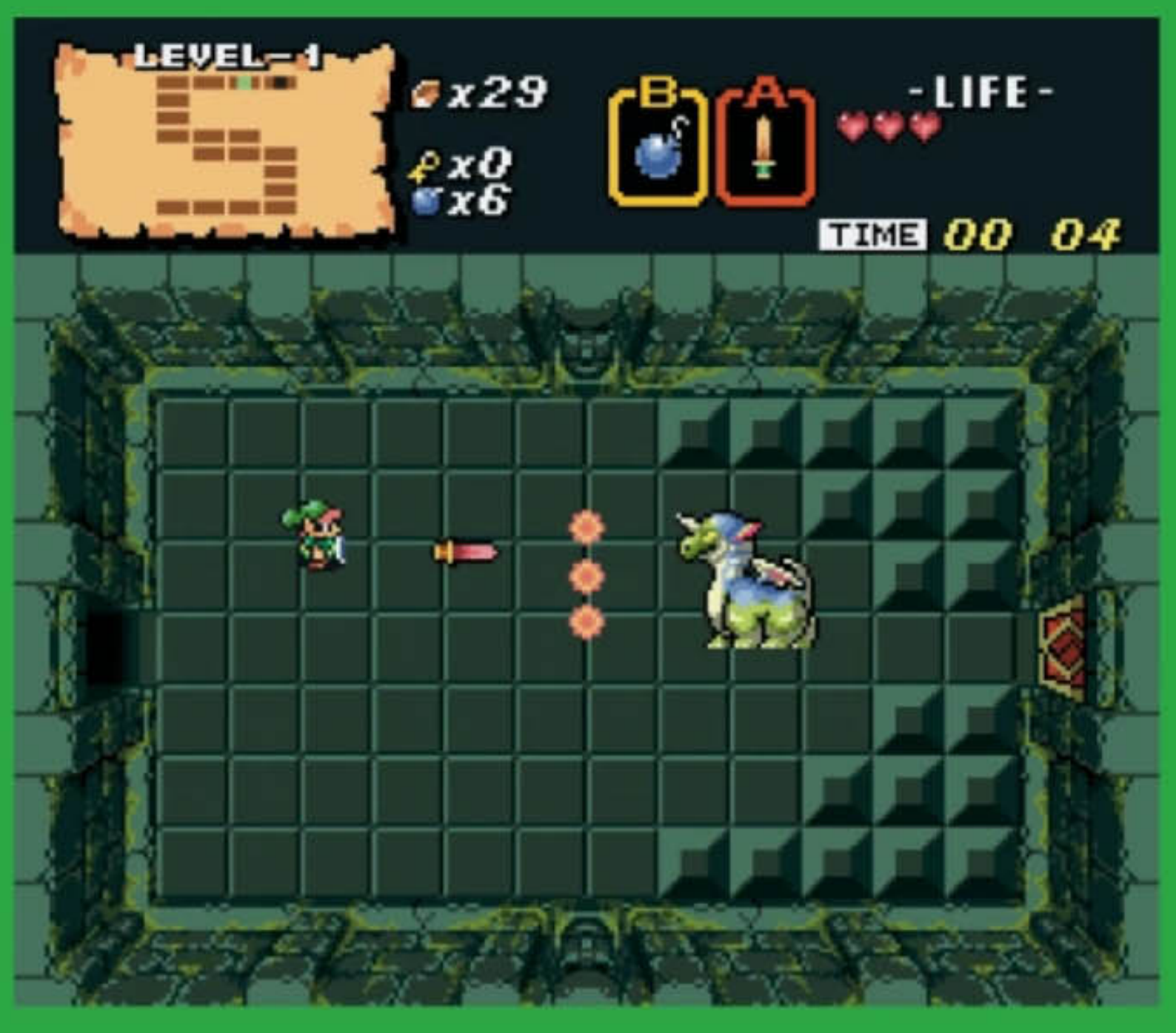
FAMICOM CARTRIDGE (1994)

Zelda eventually got its Japanese cartridge release in 1994, eight years after the disk release and a staggering eleven years after the launch of the Famicom console. The game is virtually the same except that it's renamed *Zelda No Densetsu 1*, given that the second, third and even fourth *Zelda* games had been released by 1994.

Nintendo
ゼルダの伝説 1

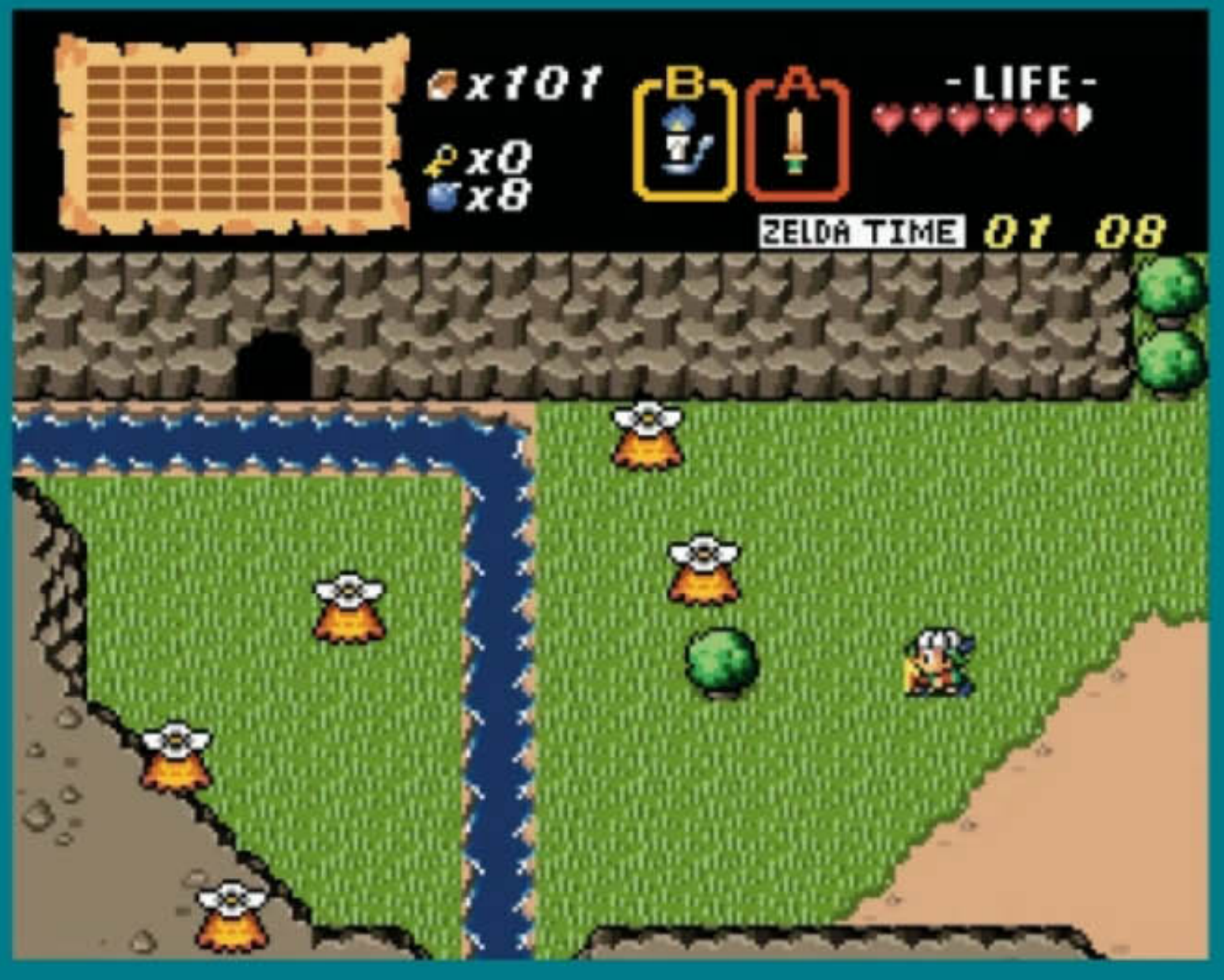
BS ZELDA NO DENSETSU (1995)

A 16-bit remake of the original *Zelda*, broadcast on the Super Famicom's Satellaview add-on between August 1995 and January 1997. As well as the advanced graphics, *BS Zelda No Densetsu* also made use of the hardware's SoundLink feature to provide a live narration throughout the broadcast quest.


LEVEL-1
x29
x0
x6
B
-LIFE-
TIME 00 04

BS ZELDA NO DENSETSU MAP 2 (1996)

Basically the same game but based on the second quest from *The Legend Of Zelda*, this *BS Zelda* is much more elusive and was broadcast one time only in March 1996.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: COLLECTOR'S EDITION (2003)

A promotional GameCube disc that was never officially sold but given away to Nintendo customers to promote the upcoming release of *The Wind Waker*. The disc includes emulated versions of *Zelda II*, *Ocarina Of Time*, *Majora's Mask* and, of course, *The Legend Of Zelda*, which featured a new translation that corrected some of the 'Engrish' in the original NES version, as well as changing the name of Gannon to the more canonical Ganon.

ONLY FOR
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA
COLLECTOR'S EDITION
PROMOTIONAL DISC
INCLUDES 4 CLASSIC GAMES!
7+
NOT FOR RESALE
PAL
Nintendo

VIRTUAL CONSOLE (2006)

The Legend Of Zelda was one of the first big Nintendo games to be distributed on the Wii's Virtual Console service. Sadly, the European version ran in 50Hz as part of Nintendo's ludicrous policy of remaining faithful to the version each territory remembers, despite the fact that it used the updated 2003 translation.

Welcome to the Wii Shop Channel

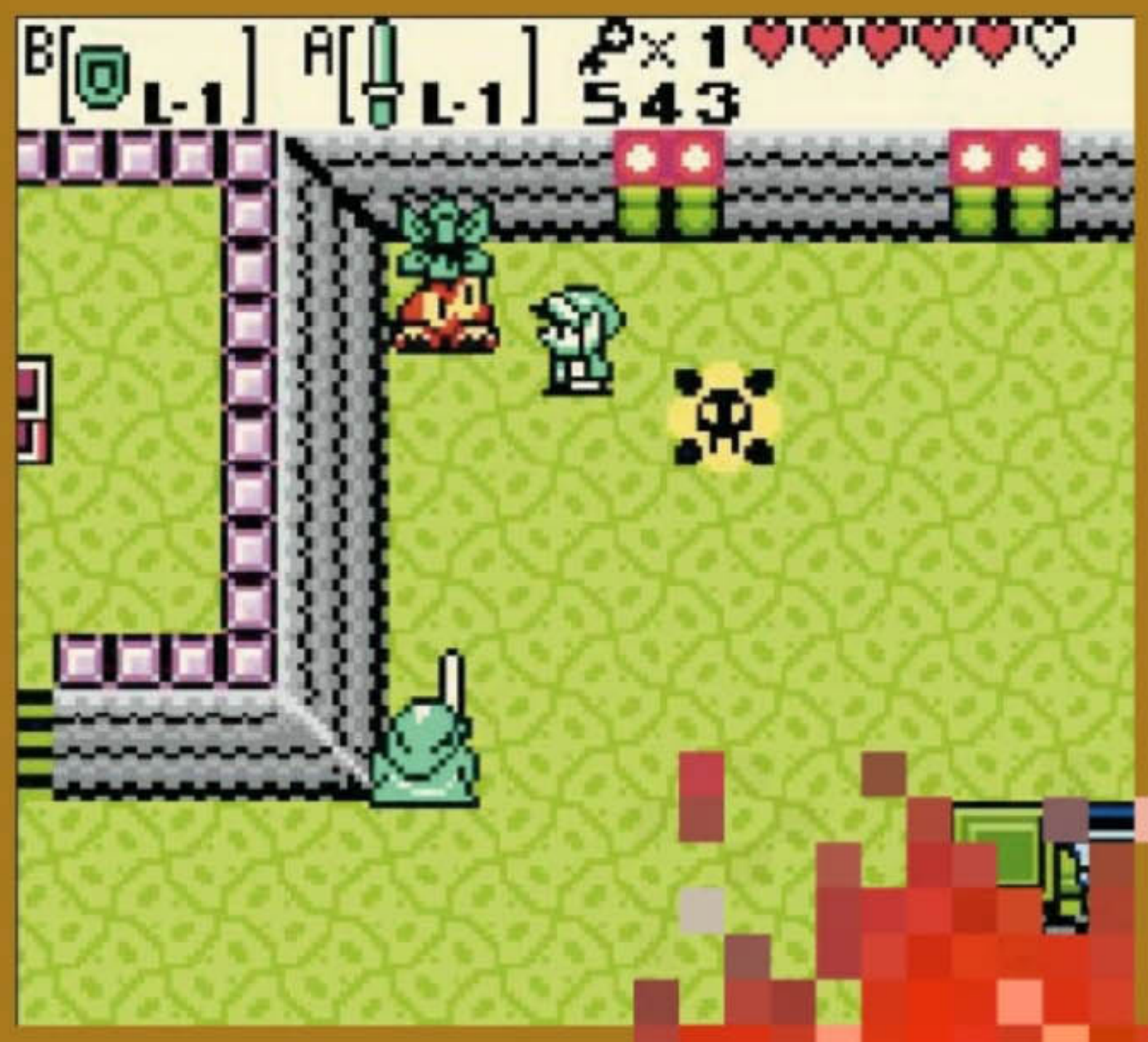
Important info:

The Wii Shop Channel is Now Open!

Start Shopping

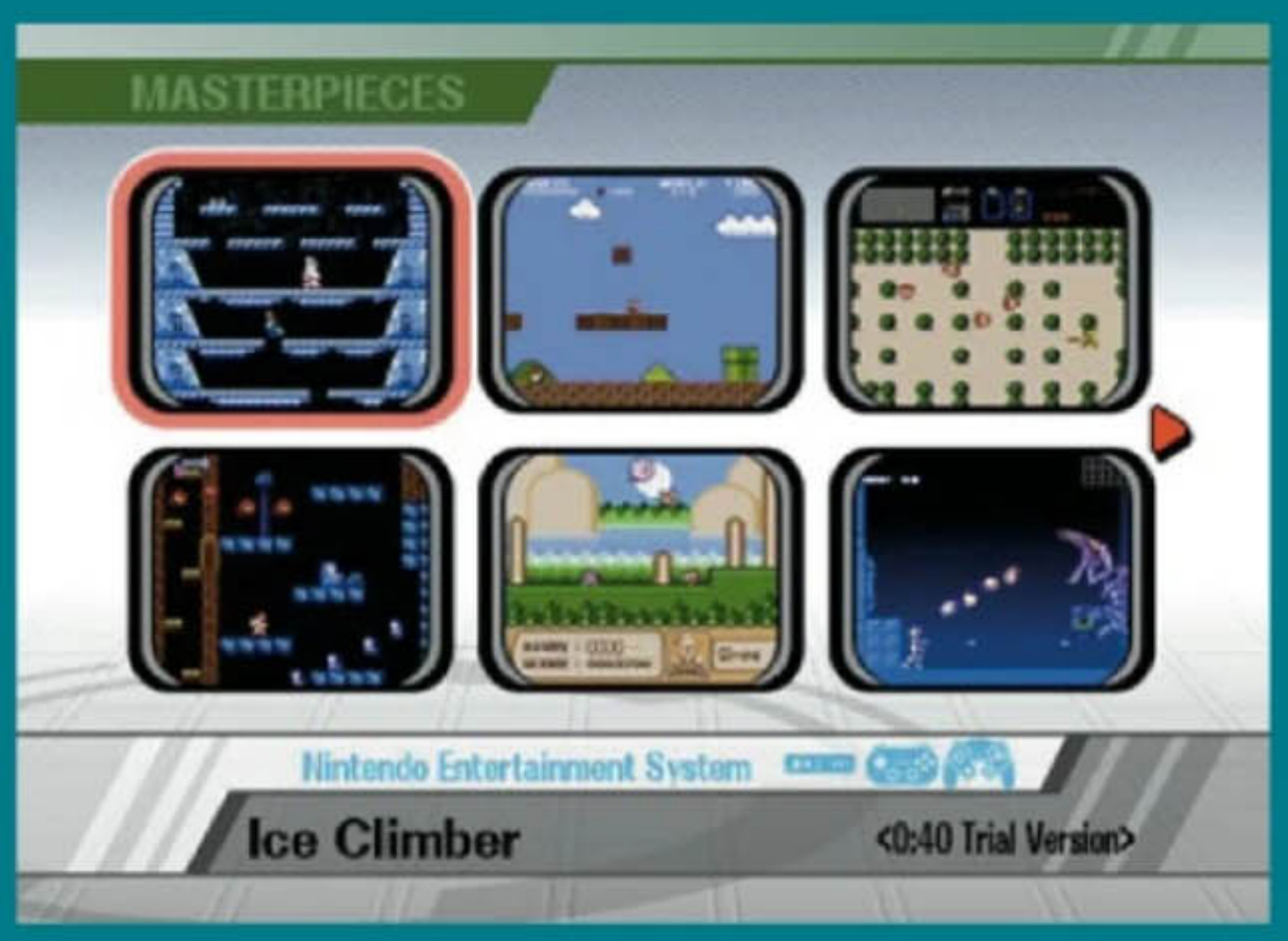
GAME BOY COLOR REMAKE (2000, cancelled)

In 1999, Yoshi Okamoto of Capcom negotiated a deal to develop six new *Zelda* titles for the Game Boy Color. Flagship worked on the remake for a year but encountered a number of problems. One was that the GBC's resolution was too different to that of the NES, meaning the game had to be redrawn to fit the more narrow screen, and another was that the team wanted to rebalance the game to make it less difficult. The remake was eventually scrapped in 2000 as Flagship changed direction. At Miyamoto's request, the studio started work on three interlinked games in the 'Triforce' series, named *Mystical Seed Of Wisdom*, *Mystical Seed Of Power* and *Mystical Seed Of Courage*. This idea proved too ambitious, however, and had to be downgraded to the two games that were eventually released: *Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons*. The latter evolved directly from *Mystical Seed Of Power*, which was developed off the back of the remake project, and you can still find similarities between *Seasons* and *The Legend Of Zelda* today.



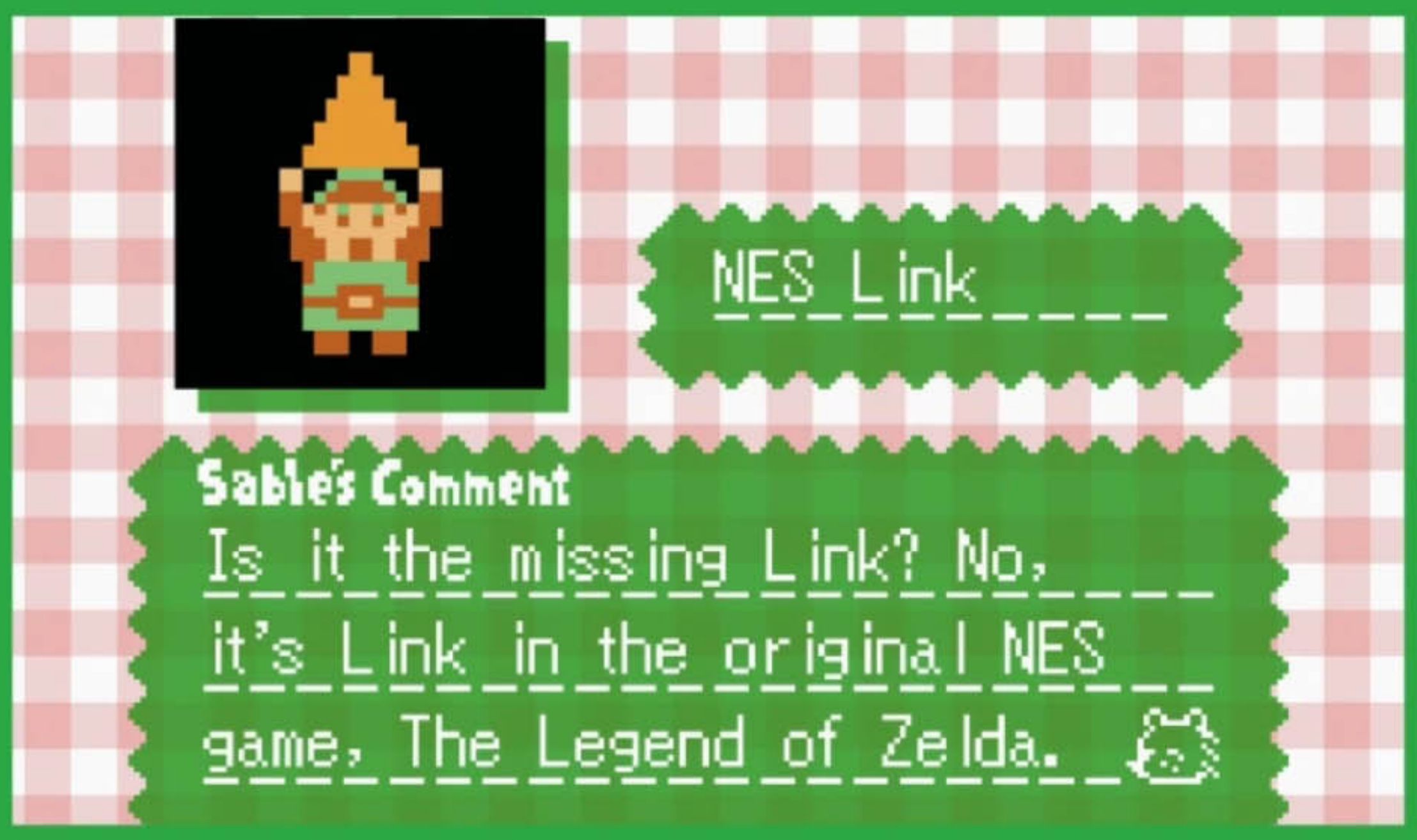
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MASTERPIECE DEMO (2008)

Nintendo's all-star Wii fighting game *Super Smash Bros Brawl* contains a Vault section that celebrates the history of the playable characters that appear in the game, and the Vault includes a selection of Masterpieces – timed demos of old games so that you can go hands-on with history yourself. With five *Zelda* characters, three of them different versions of Link, appearing in *Brawl*, it's only natural that *The Legend Of Zelda* appears on the disc.



ANIMAL CROSSING (2001)

Both the Nintendo 64 and GameCube editions of *Animal Crossing* allowed players to enjoy a series of NES games in their virtual homes. *The Legend Of Zelda* was one of those games although, weirdly, it was buried in the code and couldn't be accessed without using cheat devices.



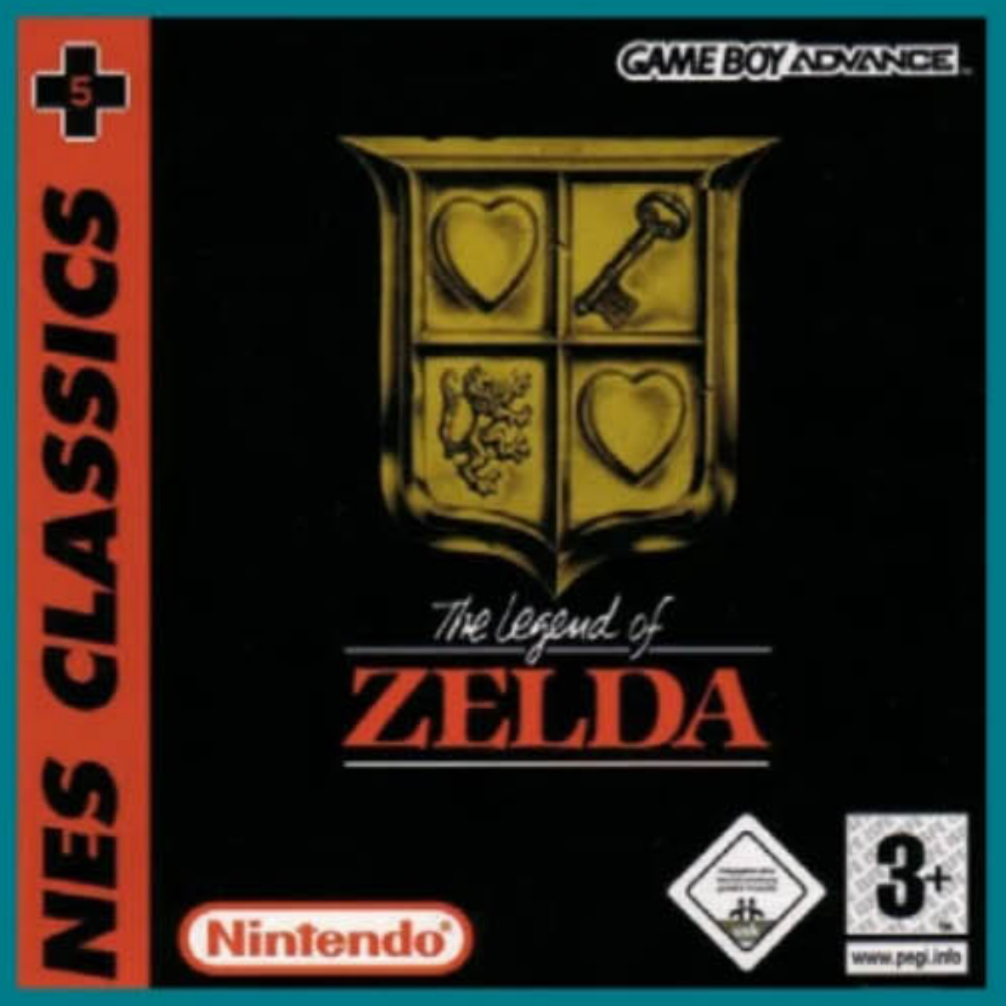
NES Link

Sable's Comment

Is it the missing Link? No, it's Link in the original NES game, The Legend of Zelda.

NES CLASSICS: THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (2004)

In 2004 Nintendo released a series of Game Boy Advance games called Famicom Minis, which re-created favourite Famicom games on yellow cartridges that came packaged in tiny, cute boxes. When the series came to Europe and America, it was re-envisioned to evoke nostalgia for the NES and sadly lost the cute boxes, but we did get some cool NES games. This version was reformatted for the GBA's wide screen and featured the same new translation as the GameCube remake.



3D CLASSICS EDITION (2012)

When the 3DS was first shown off at E3 2010, one of the tech demos was a series of 'Classic Games' redrawn to take advantage of the 3D display, and one of the games in that showreel was *The Legend Of Zelda*. Nintendo has since confirmed plans to sell downloadable '3D Classics' through the 3DS's eShop service, starting with *3D Excitebike*. *The Legend Of Zelda* hasn't officially been confirmed, but given that *Ocarina Of Time* has been remade for the system, and that Shigeru Miyamoto has expressed interest in giving similar treatment to *A Link To The Past*, it's easy to assume that the original *Zelda* will appear in 3D pretty soon.

New
New
New
tual
nsole
NINTENDO 3DS
Search

New Nintendo 3DS Games in Stores

KID ICARUS

ALMOST THE PITS

ANGEL LAND STORY
Kid Icarus
TM
©1986 Nintendo

- **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- **YEAR:** 1986
- **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES

HISTORY

There are some who regard *Kid Icarus* as an unsung hero of the NES. But while I'd be the first to admit that the game looks and sounds pretty – thanks to it running from the same guts as *Metroid*, and having that sublime Tanaka music. For me, it's ruined somewhat by some frustrating little design flaws.

Kid Icarus still demonstrates that good ol' Nintendo template; creating a videogame based on three central characters: a good God, a bad God, who's been turned into an evil medusa by the good God, and an unlikely hero with a stupid name.

Essentially trying to cram platform, shooting and RPG elements into one game and, for the most part, succeeding, *Kid Icarus* sadly seems to undo some of that greatness by throwing up a troupe of brilliantly drawn, but annoyingly cheap enemies that make you want to rip the cart from your NES and kick it at a furnace.

Pit, your angelic hero, has to face off against an army of skeletons that will absorb a ridiculous amount of arrows, silly sporadic squids that miraculously appear from the base of the screen at the most maddening of moments and plenty of stupid drops that kill your character outright. But thanks to its levelling up and shopping elements, the further you get in the game the easier it gets.

For the quest, Nintendo has bestowed us one measly life, which was probably its attempt to impart this jarring sense of realism. But when you're playing a videogame about an angel quashing a bunch of flying eyes and eggplants with arrow heads, surely it's all pointless.

The game isn't a complete tool, however, as when you die, you can always fall back on its 24-digit, case-sensitive password system. Nintendo would soften the blow though by putting it to use on some brilliant cheat codes. Just input '8uuuuu uuuuuu uuuuuu uuuuuu' if you want to see the game's final *Parodius* stage – and see a fully powered Pit take to the skies and face off against a giant eyeball and its pet dragon.

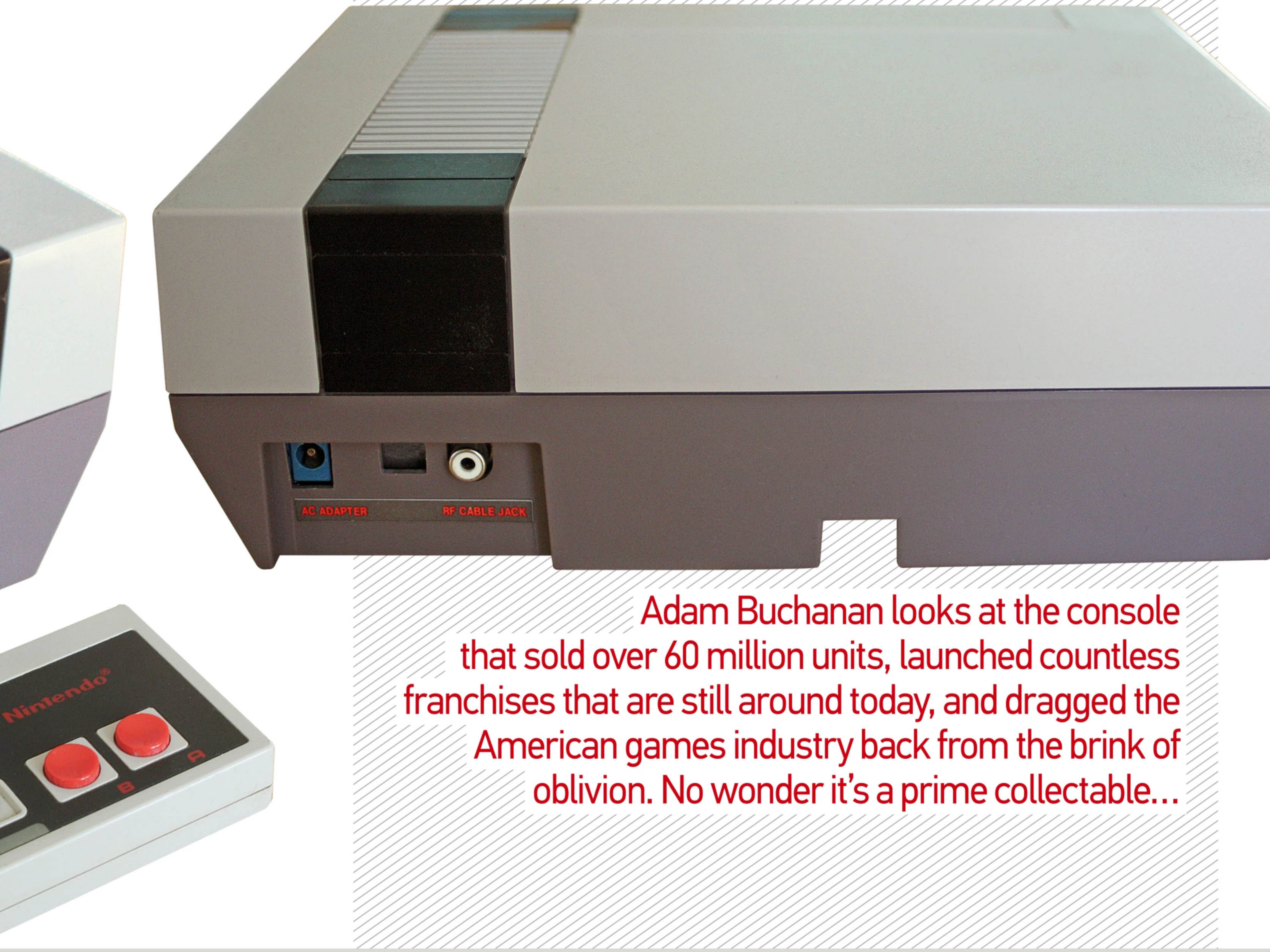
136
162
136
150
142
154

MAY I HELP YOU?
WE HAVE EVERYTHING.

151
210
020
390
149
999

Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM™
NES VERSION
1
2
POWER
RESET
SELECT
START

NINTENDO ENTERT



Adam Buchanan looks at the console that sold over 60 million units, launched countless franchises that are still around today, and dragged the American games industry back from the brink of oblivion. No wonder it's a prime collectable…

» **Manufacturer:** Nintendo » **Models:** NES/Famicom » **Launched:** 1983 (Japan, as Famicom), 1985 (US), 1986 (Europe) » **Country of origin:** Japan

AINMENT SYSTEM

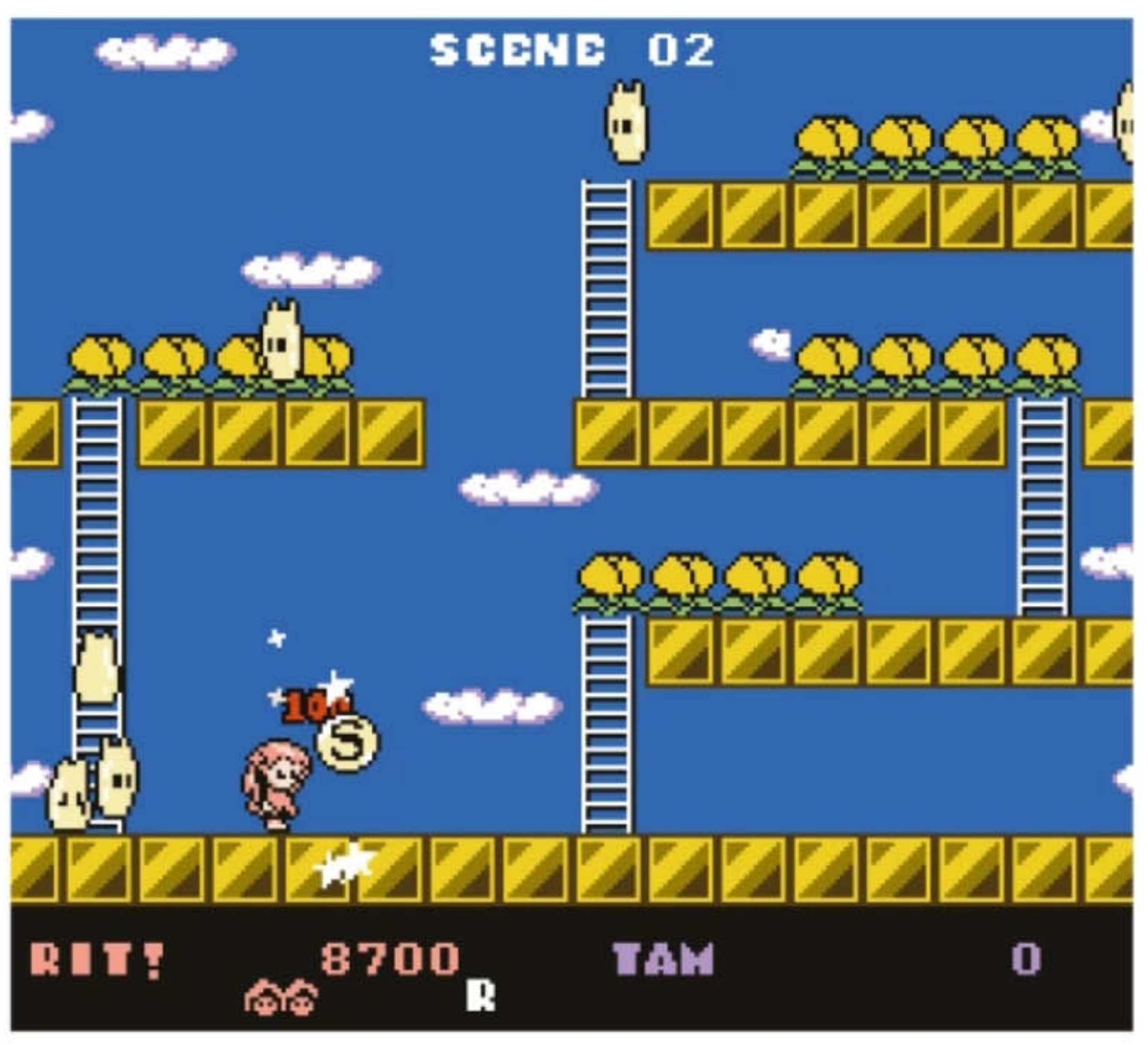
Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM™ NES VERSION The Collector's Guide

CONTROL DECK
THE MOST CHALLENGING VIDEO GAME SYSTEM EVER DEVELOPED.
NES VERSION
Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM™
SUPER MARIO 2

» There are numerous hardware bundles out there, from *Super Mario Bros 2* to the ever-popular *Super Mario Bros* and *Duck Hunt* combo.

CONTROL DECK
NES VERSION
Nintendo

P 0001300 LIFE P=02 WORLD 1-1
I 0050000 TIME 0267



Micro Machines
Super Adventure Quests
The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy
Codemasters
Firehawk
MiG 29
Cosmic Spacehead

» With its roots in 8-bit micros and their open publishing models, Codemasters wasn't initially keen on bending to Nintendo's control.

Why it's collectable

In 1983, Nintendo unleashed one of Japan's finest products to date. The Family Computer (Famicom) was the latest 8-bit console to be released, and it would become the bestselling system available by the end of 1984. Upon its US launch, the rebranded Famicom, the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), refuelled the country's dying videogame industry. Homeward bound, however, what did Europeans have to get excited about with the iconic console? It certainly wasn't the lack of localised releases, nor the fact that Nintendo really took its time delivering what the rest of the world was already talking about…

Prior to the console's European release, gamers had been drowning in an ocean of low-quality software. Atari had exhausted the 2600 with just about everything its dated hardware could handle, while home computers began to suffer from a heavily saturated market of homemade releases. Nintendo was aware of these issues and proceeded to offer gamers the lifeline they had been crying out for. Not only did the NES sail in with state-of-the-art visuals and a stunning audio chip, but also Nintendo's Seal of Quality. This restricted developers to no more than five games for the system per year, ensuring that focus was placed on quality, not quantity.

With such a huge focus on hosting software of the highest merit, it comes as a real surprise how many games were made available. An incredible tally of over 1,000 cartridges were distributed for the Famicom. A large majority of these, among a wealth of exclusive additions, went on to make up the 700-plus games in the American NES library. Europe, however, had to make do with just shy of 350 licensed releases. This deficiency of cartridges in PAL territories encompassed several big losses, including *Final Fantasy*, *Dragon Quest* and even the sixth outing of *Mega Man*. Despite a diminished selection, adoring fans from all over the world have begun to home in on the handful of exclusive PAL localisations attainable. To name a few, these include a solid port of the arcade classic *Rodland*, the elusive Metroidvania title *Ufouria*, and Konami's take on a Biblical game with *Noah's Ark*.

In order to aid gamers wanting a better grip on the on-screen action, countless peripherals, which took gaming in previously unimaginable directions, began to see mass manufacture. While many of these offered little functionality in the way of gameplay, some have since become an integral part of game culture. ROB (Robotic Operating Buddy), a mechanical being who took commands as player two, and the Power Glove, a garment-turned-control-pad that supposedly placed precision into the palm of your hand, have both become highly desirable items, despite their limited usability. While these are the premium offerings, the NES has its fair share of laughable accessories. The bizarre Laserscope headset, for instance, was intended for use on flight simulation games, requiring the player to self-consciously shout 'Fire' every time an enemy flew into sight. Overall, the arrival of the revolutionary console brought along many ambitious

CF
POWERPAK
COMPACT FLASH SYSTEM
RetroZone

MEGA MAN
MEGA MAN 2
MEGA MAN 3
MEGA MAN 4
MEGA MAN 5
Nintendo

» *Mega Man 6* was never released in PAL regions, making a complete series collection frustratingly impossible to obtain.

Did you know?

■ In 1987, Bandai released a floor mat controller for the NES known as Family Fun Fitness. This primitive attempt to keep gamers fit saw the arrival of two compatible games, before Nintendo bought the rights to the technology and rebranded it as the Power Pad. Prior to this acquisition, the American version of the second compatible game, *Stadium Events*, was only available during a brief seasonal period. So few copies sold that growing demand to secure *Stadium Events* today has given rise to some hefty prices. In 2010, a factory-sealed copy fetched $41,300 at auction. European collectors, however, can rest easy, as the PAL version is not as rare and commands only a fraction of this astonishing price.

» The Famicom is one of the most cloned systems ever, with hundreds of variants found on dodgy market stalls around the world, even today.

SCORPION 8
SCORPION 8
SCORPION 8
CONTROL DECK
THE MOST CHALLENGING VIDEO GAME SYSTEM EVER DEVELOPED.
NES VERSION
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

BANDAI
Family Fun Fitness
STADIUM EVENTS

accessories that wouldn't even advance beyond the drawing board if pitched today.

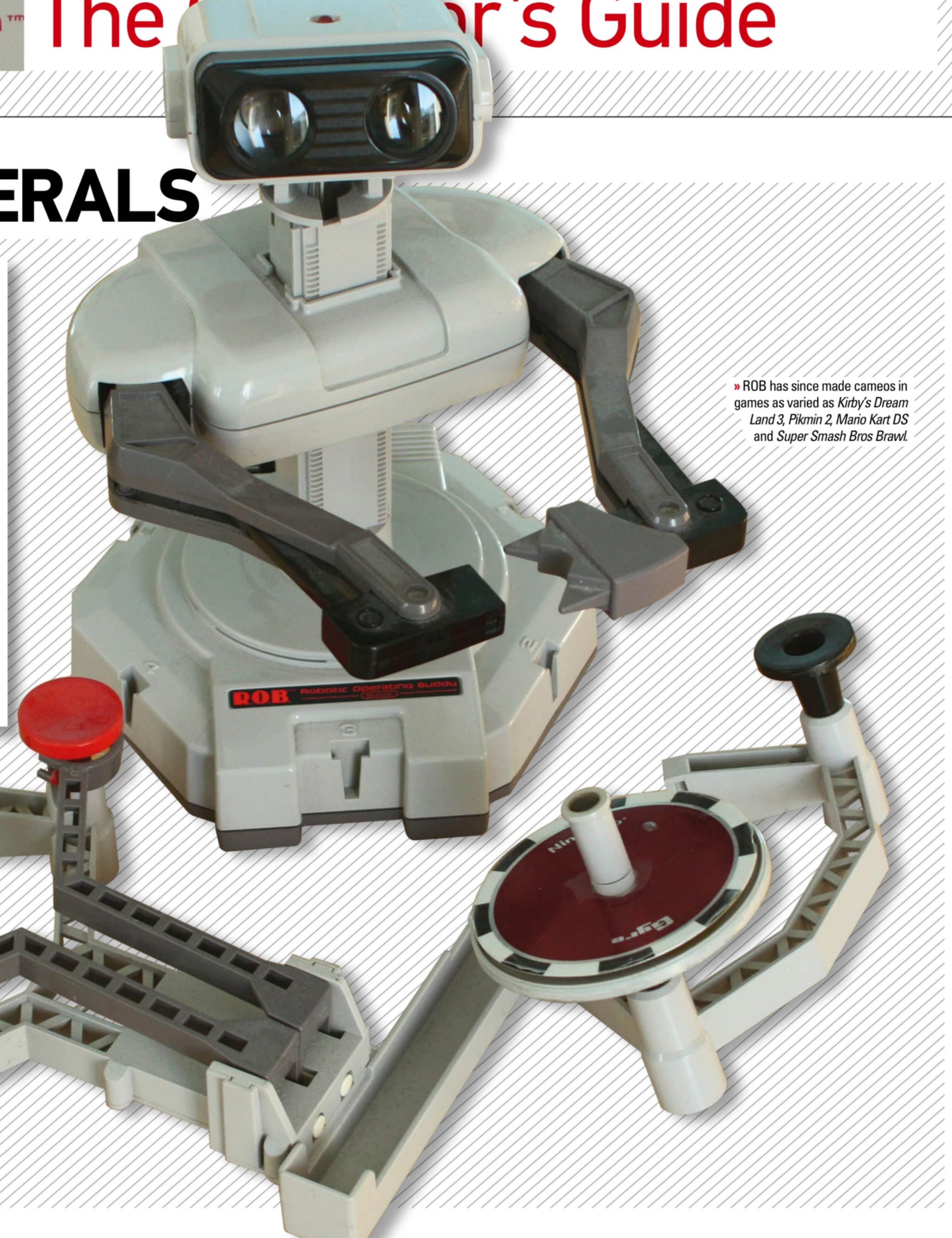
If the thought of shouting at your TV isn't enough to entice you towards Nintendo's creation, maybe the import side of the system can win you over, with many Famicom-exclusive add-ons and releases available. For example, the Famicom Disk System attached itself underneath the console, introducing a new disk-based media format upon which software could be supplied. One of the most notable and exclusive arrivals on this new medium, which missed out on a cartridge release in Japan, was *Bubble Bobble*. The list of unusual additions continues with the likes of a keyboard combined with software to program your very own games, 3D glasses, karaoke systems, and even a modem to bring the vintage hardware online.

While the majority of these obscurities were limited to Japan, the UK also had its fair share of intriguing, albeit unlicensed, additions. British software developer Codemasters released a handful of games for the NES, all of which were released without an official licence. Without the authentic development hardware, an unauthorised method to bypass the system's security was crafted, allowing games like *Dizzy* and *Cosmic Spacehead* to make their Nintendo debuts. Codemasters later went on to ruffle Nintendo's feathers further by manufacturing an unofficial cheat cartridge known as the Game Genie. This device was quickly accused of being a violation of copyright law by Nintendo, resulting in lawsuits arriving on Codemasters' doorstep. Much to everyone's surprise, the company managed to win the courts over and was allowed to continue selling the device. While Codemasters would later gain Nintendo's permission to release games on its consoles, it enjoyed a free ride on the back of the NES's success for many years.

As we reminisce over Nintendo's 8-bit console and how it previously held the record for the bestselling system of all time, it's only natural to assume that items are readily available. While this statement might hold true for the likes of *Super Mario Bros* and *The Legend Of Zelda*, acquiring a complete PAL NES library is a collector's worst nightmare, due to many publishers deciding to limit which games were released in each country. To put this into perspective, you'd need to cruise to Spain to grab *City Connection*, go globe-trotting towards Australia to secure *Aussie Rules Footy*, enjoy the sights of Scandinavia while seizing *Mr Gimmick*, stop by France for *Lethal Weapon* and then return to the UK to locate *Mario Is Missing*. To make matters worse, *Phantom Air Mission* and *Snowboard Challenge*, two incredibly elusive Spanish exclusives, are rarities that could put the infamous American gold Nintendo World Championships cartridge to shame. If anything, the PAL NES collection could be the hardest of them all to obtain.

With all of this in mind, it has to be said that although the PAL NES library holds an incredible amount of depth and enjoyment within, it is by far the most daunting. Should you be able to look beyond the challenges ahead and have the finances to foot the bill, you'll be set for one of the most thrilling retro gaming hunts you could ever imagine.

THE PERIPHERALS



» ROB has since made cameos in games as varied as *Kirby's Dream Land 3*, *Pikmin 2*, *Mario Kart DS* and *Super Smash Bros Brawl*.

» ROB's complicated-looking accessories don't make him appear particularly accessible to play with.

Robotic Operating Buddy

If there is anything Nintendo is known for, it's innovation. The Japanese gaming giant has always known how we want to enjoy our games, years in advance. Although the masterminds there are usually on the money, they have occasionally missed the mark and quietly swept it under the carpet. Sadly, ROB falls into this category of tried and tested gimmicks.

The Robotic Operating Buddy was Nintendo's big idea for 1985. Understanding the limitations of videogames being two-dimensional forms of entertainment, Nintendo released the Family Robot, as it was known in Japan, to break down the fourth wall. Once it was placed somewhere in front of the TV, this unusual character would await commands from the on-screen action. Up, down, left, right, open and close were the motions to which this mechanical being would respond – more than enough for Nintendo to sculpt a game around it.

Gyromite was the first title released under the 'Robot Series' label to utilise this new hardware. Our new robotic friend was set to become our second player, once equipped with the vast array of gear included. This attire consisted of a pair of gripping gloves, two spinning gyroscopes, an attachment to hold the second control pad and press the A and B buttons, a motor to spin the gyroscopes, and two empty trays to deposit the inactive gyroscopes. This abundant selection of robot accessories, in turn, would supposedly create the new experience we had all been waiting for.

Despite the complicated setup, the idea behind the robot's input was dead simple. *Gyromite*'s gameplay required you to manipulate elevating red and blue pillars, which could only be achieved by input from the second control pad. As the supporting controller was firmly lodged in one of the robot's attachments, it was up to you to send the right on-screen commands to ROB to clear your path. This was accomplished by rotating the robot in the direction of the gyroscope spinner, closing his grip on a gyroscope, moving back around to the attachment holding the control pad, and then lowering the spinning gyroscope onto one of the coloured concave buttons. Upon doing so, the weight of the gyroscope would press down on the lever, forcing the attachment to press a button on the second control pad and making the matching coloured pillar on screen traverse in the opposite direction. Although this process was straightforward enough, getting the commands to ROB was the hard part. Roaming enemies on the screen made you think twice about pausing your movement to communicate beyond the television.

Although Nintendo did release another game under the Robot Series (*Stack-Up*), the Robotic Operating Buddy became a short-lived one-trick pony. Whether this was down to the lack of directions in which to expand gameplay or simply due to poor sales, ROB has lived to tell his tale by not only becoming a cult icon, but also by making various cameo appearances in Nintendo games through the years.

…AND THE REST

GAME GENIE
VIDEO GAME ENHANCER
Galoob

01

Broderbund
UFORCE
Power Field Controller For Your Nintendo Entertainment System.
You touch nothing…Yet it knows your every move!
Recommended for ages 8 to adult.

02

Nintendo
NES FOUR SCORE
TURBO

03

Nintendo
NES Advantage
TURBO
PLAYER
SELECT
START
SLOW

04

Fitness Center
Nintendo Entertainment System

05

TURBO TOUCH 360
START
SELECT
TURBO
TRIAX

06

POWER GLOVE
REVOLUTIONARY VIDEO GAME INTERFACE! / INTERFACE DE JEU VIDEO REVOLUTIONNAIRE!
Nintendo Entertainment System
Size: Tailles: LG

07

01. Game Genie

■ Galoob's efforts to blow NES games wide open with memory-hacking cheats were met with a legal battle with Nintendo over what the console manufacturer considered a violation of copyright law. As Nintendo eventually lost the case against the Game Genie, gamers have since been enjoying the unauthorised offerings of Mario's moonwalking ability and Link's never-ending supply of rupees.

02. U-Force

■ Although motion controls didn't begin to materialise in a big way until 2006, Brøderbund took a stab at creating a futuristic hands-free controller in 1989. This device used perpendicular infra-red sensor panels to relay the player's physical movement to the NES. Despite a forward-thinking approach, the U-Force would only recognise the occasional interaction before becoming a bargain bin special.

03. Four Score

■ Long before the Nintendo 64 sported a wealth of controller ports, the NES had its very own party-hosting device. With a selection of games supporting Nintendo's much earlier answer to multiplayer gaming, the Four Score doubled up the available controller ports, despite an inconceivable tangle of wires.

04. NES Advantage

■ With countless arcade games being ported to the NES, it made perfect sense to bring the true coin-op experience home. The Advantage arcade stick was Nintendo's answer to tactile controls with an authentic feel, without the need for a pocket full of change.

05. Family Fun Fitness Pad

■ In the days before *Wii Fit* branded videogames as a healthy activity, Bandai attempted to get us off our backsides and on our feet. Using similar technology to the later *Dance Dance Revolution* mat, the Family Fun Fitness Pad, renamed the Power Pad in the US, took a real beating from the bundled *Track & Field*-style games in *Athletic World*.

06. Turbo Touch 360

■ Where control pads are concerned, the Turbo Touch 360 is quite possibly the worst of all time. Despite being backed by a promising ad campaign, promoting its touch sensor for "effortless movement in all directions", you'd be lucky to get any response out of this technology.

07. Power Glove

■ "Now you're playing with power." At least that's what they hoped you'd think as you slipped on the Power Glove. This wearable control pad relied heavily on ultrasonic speakers to read your arm's movement, albeit very poorly. Even after an obtrusive placement in the film *The Wizard*, this accessory failed to succeed.

Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM™
NES VERSION

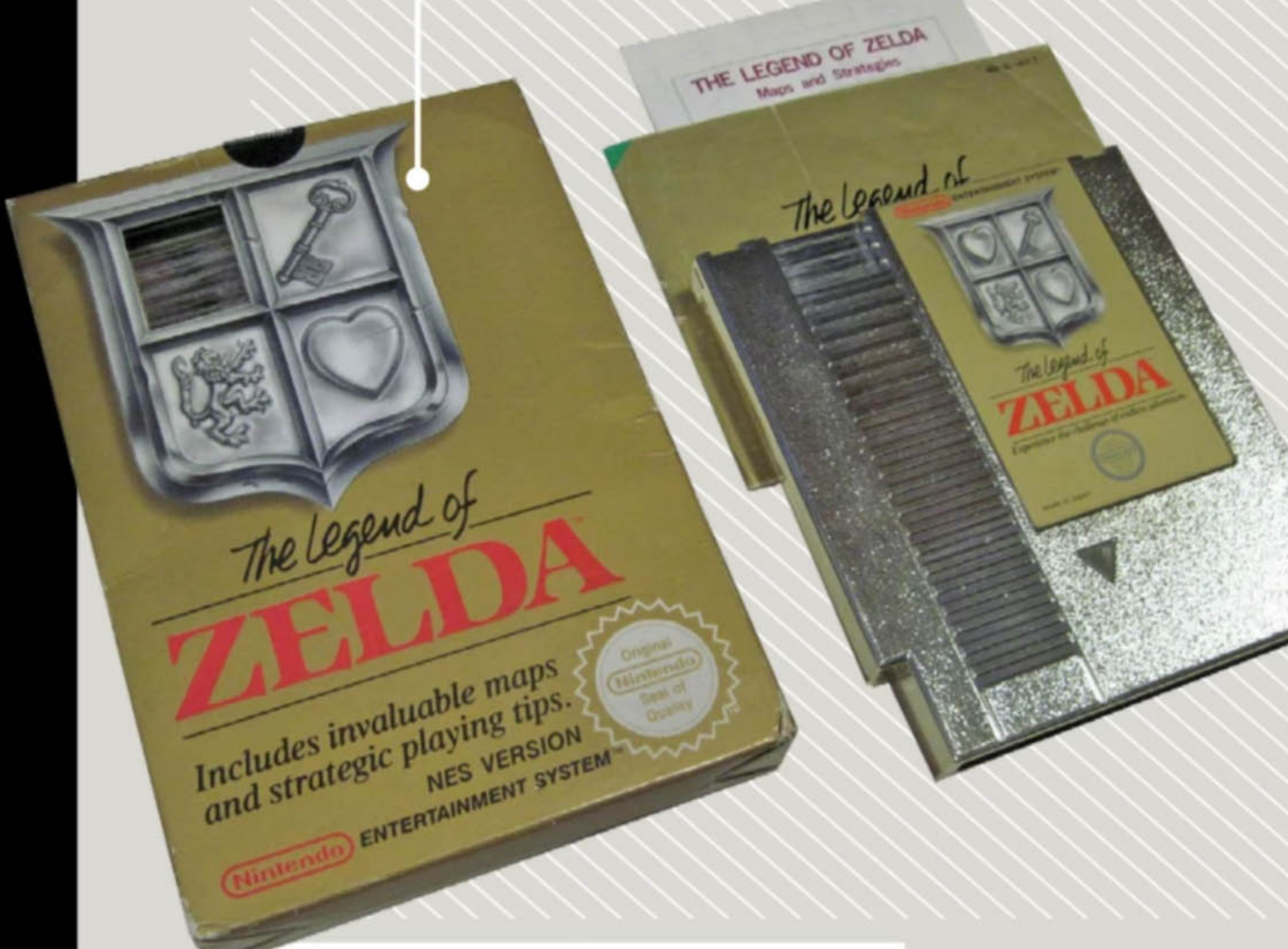
The Collector's Guide

TOP GAMES TO PLAY

Super Mario Bros 3
■ Arguably the greatest *Mario* game to date, *Super Mario Bros 3* raised the bar on previous outings and revolutionised the platform genre.

Mr Gimmick
■ Underestimating the cutesy appeal of *Mr Gimmick* will be your first mistake in this challenging platformer. Underneath that adorable exterior is one of Sunsoft's finest yet trickiest creations.

The Legend Of Zelda
■ Link's first outing paved the way for one of the greatest series of all time, and it also became a benchmark for many other adventure games to follow.



Street Gangs
■ More commonly known today by its American title of *River City Ransom*, the cast of the *Kunio-kun* series returned in a no-holds-barred RPG brawler.

Mega Man 2
■ With a rewired circuit and a host of upgrades available, the blue bomber had returned! *Mega Man 2* not only packed a punch in gameplay, but left behind one of the greatest soundtracks to date.

PLAY THESE NEXT

Super Mario Bros 2

■ After Nintendo USA deemed the Japanese sequel to *Super Mario Bros* too difficult, *Yume Kojo: Doki Doki Panic* was redesigned to feature characters from the *Mario* series. Although not a true *Mario* game, *Super Mario Bros 2* was a fantastic platformer in its own right, only made better by the arrival of the plumbers.

DuckTales

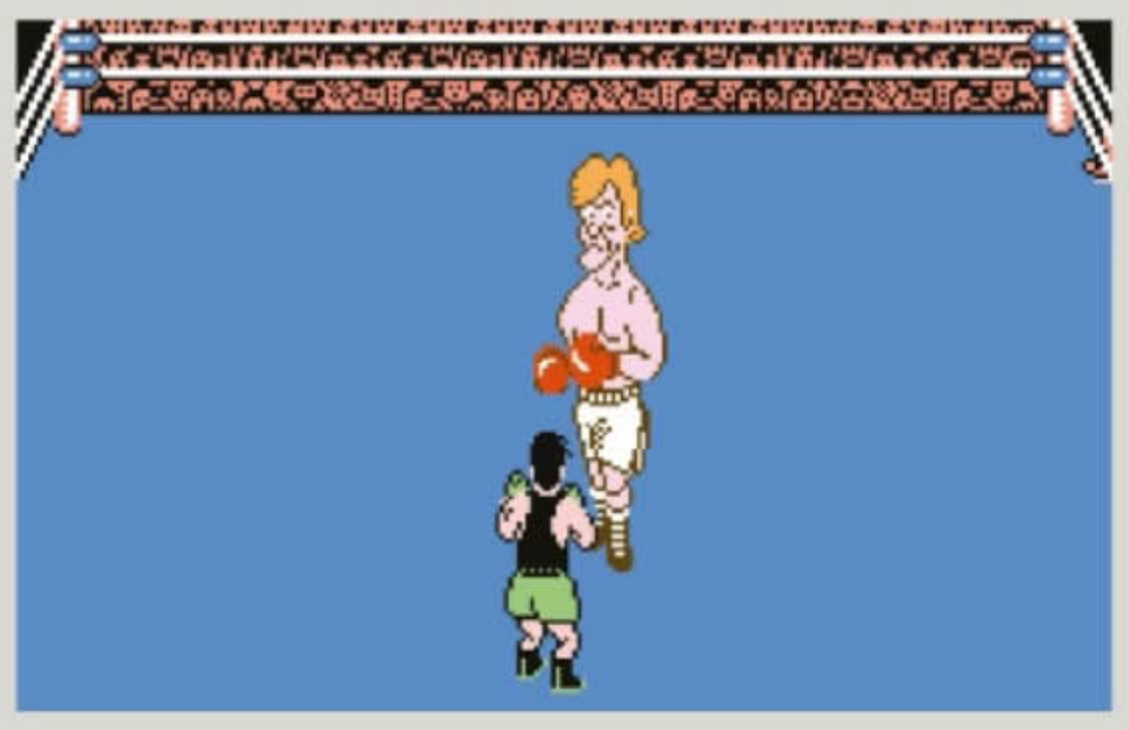
■ Despite being created for the youth of yesteryear, *DuckTales* is still one of the most enjoyable NES platformers today. While this could be said for the majority of Capcom's output under the Disney brand, Scrooge McDuck's money-pilfering adventures have stood the test of time thanks to the clear inspiration from the *Mega Man* series.

Ufouria: The Saga

■ While many would turn to *Metroid* for their non-linear side-scrolling explorations, little do they know that they're overlooking another shining example under the Sunsoft name. When Bop-Louie's friends suffer from amnesia after stumbling into a large chasm, it's up to you to restore the memories of the residents of Ufouria.

Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse

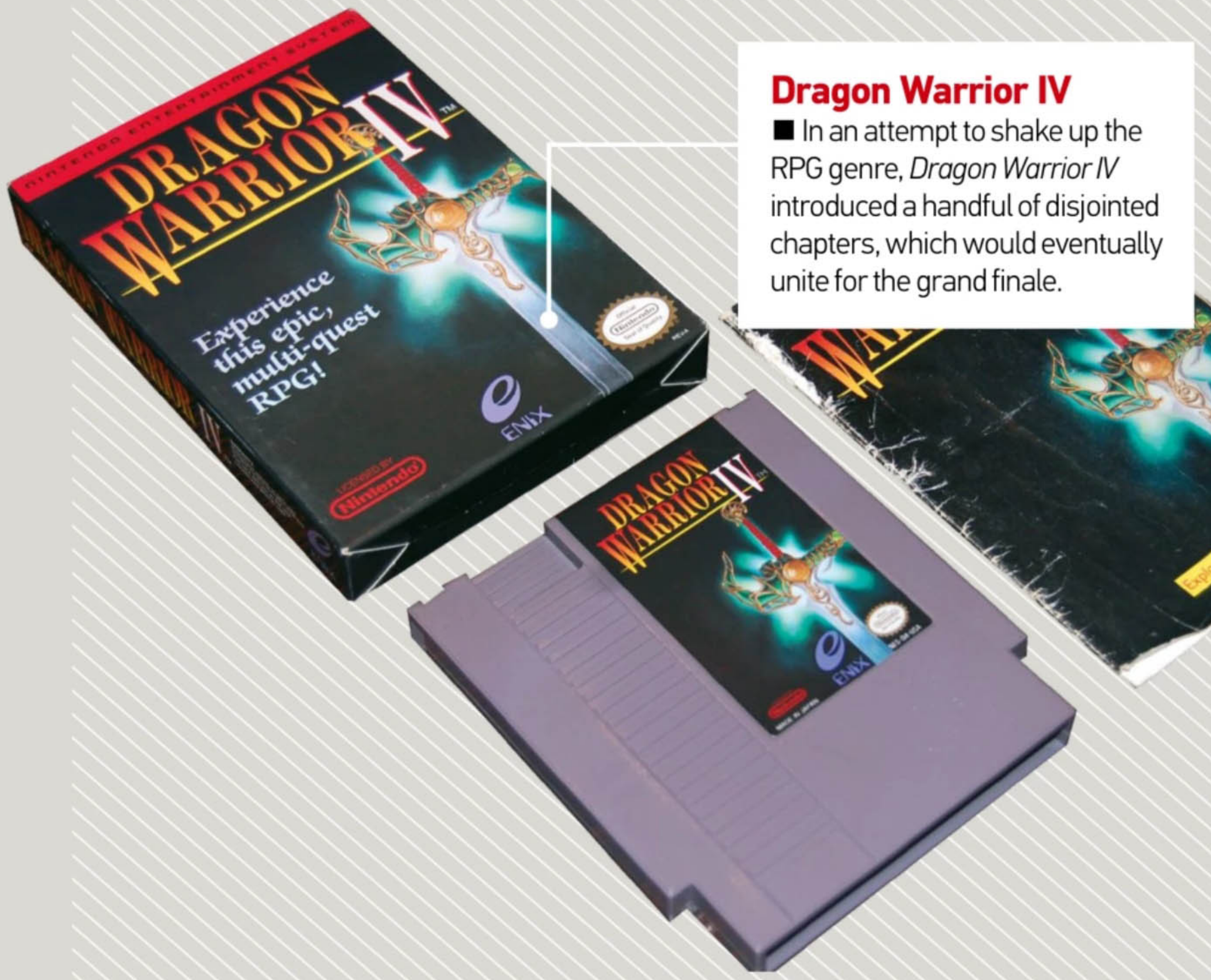
■ After an embarrassing first sequel riddled with frustrating dialogue boxes and time-consuming transitions between day and night, *Castlevania III* rectified any issues. The third and final *Castlevania* game on the 8-bit system was a more than memorable title with plenty of challenges within.



Punch-Out!!

■ The 1987 boxing simulator re-imagined the sporting genre by introducing a more tactical yet arcade-based approach. Button-bashers were quickly penalised and made to focus on mastering Little Mac's sweeps and blows. That said, using these skills against the cameo appearance of Mike Tyson was a challenge in its own right.

TOP IMPORT GAMES



Dragon Warrior IV

■ In an attempt to shake up the RPG genre, *Dragon Warrior IV* introduced a handful of disjointed chapters, which would eventually unite for the grand finale.

Final Fantasy

■ With Hironobu Sakaguchi giving everything he had towards one last effort in the games industry, his work paid off as his creation laid down the foundations for many more adventures.

The Krion Conquest

■ What do you get if you sprinkle a dash of magical power upon the *Mega Man* series? *The Krion Conquest*. This release was by no means shy in showcasing its admiration for the blue bomber.

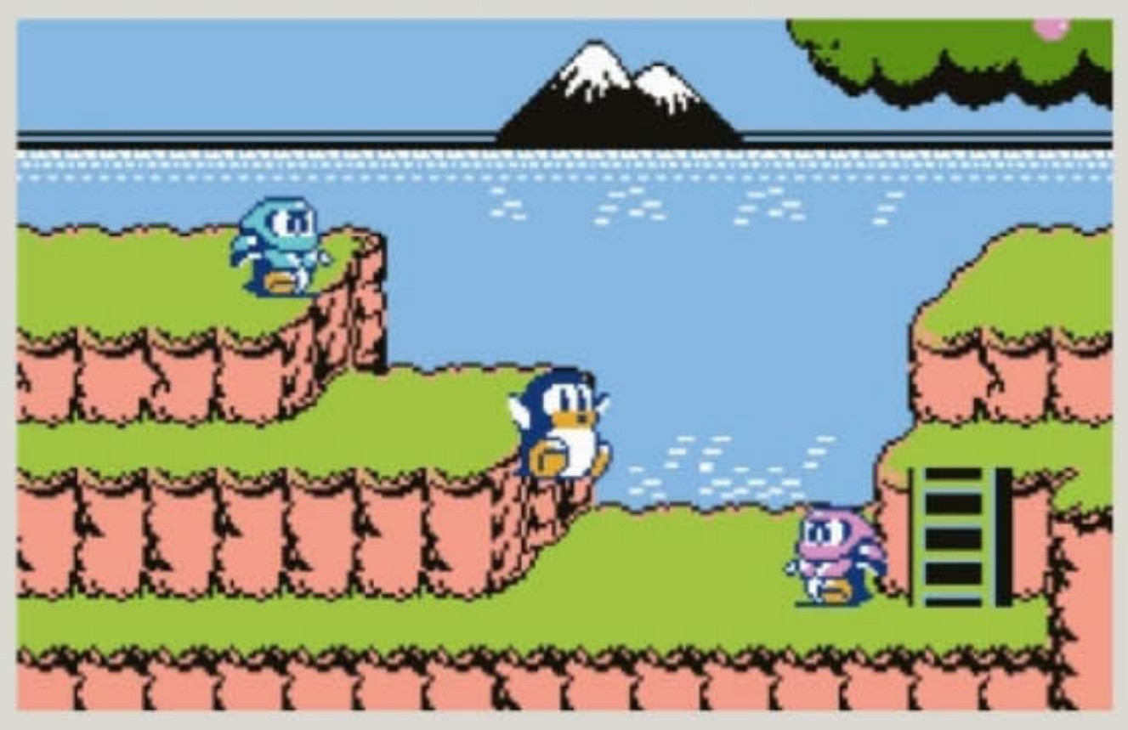
Crystalis

■ Although *The Legend Of Zelda* stole the limelight for the action-adventure genre, SNK's *Crystalis* came astonishingly close to taking centre stage away from Link.

Bubble Bobble Part 2

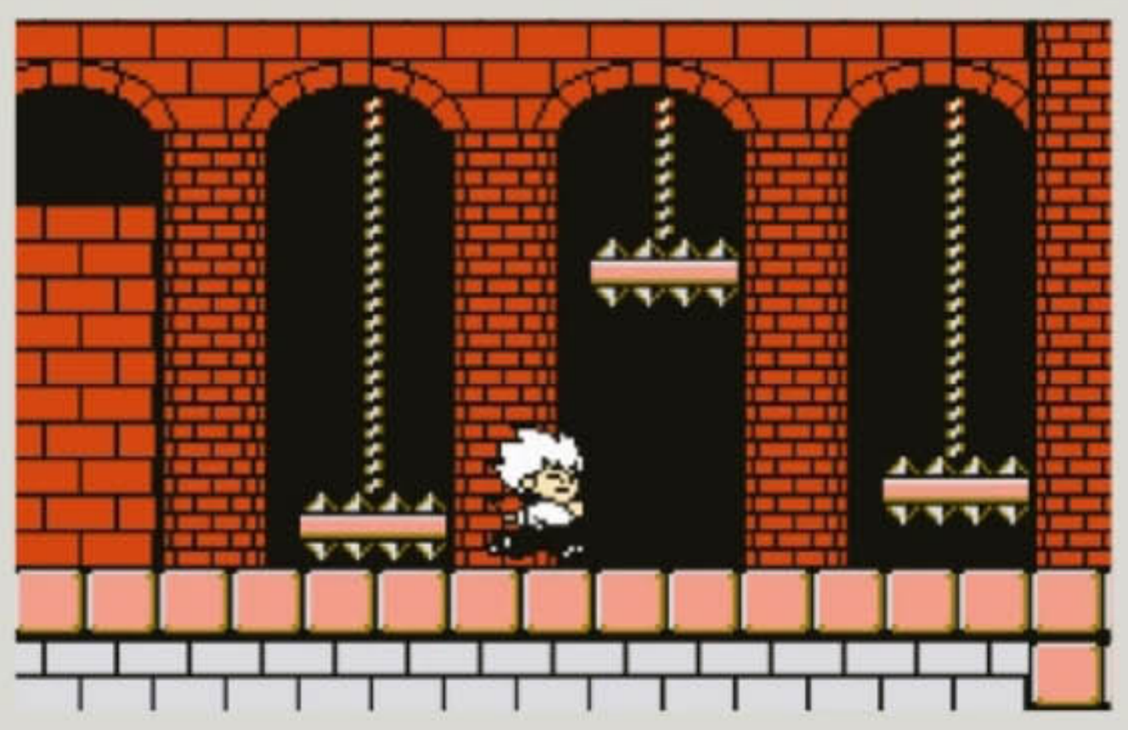
■ Never released in the arcades, this attempt to offer the dino duo a sequel was an awe-inspiring hit featuring strikingly bright visuals and an enhanced take on the original.

IMPORT THESE NEXT



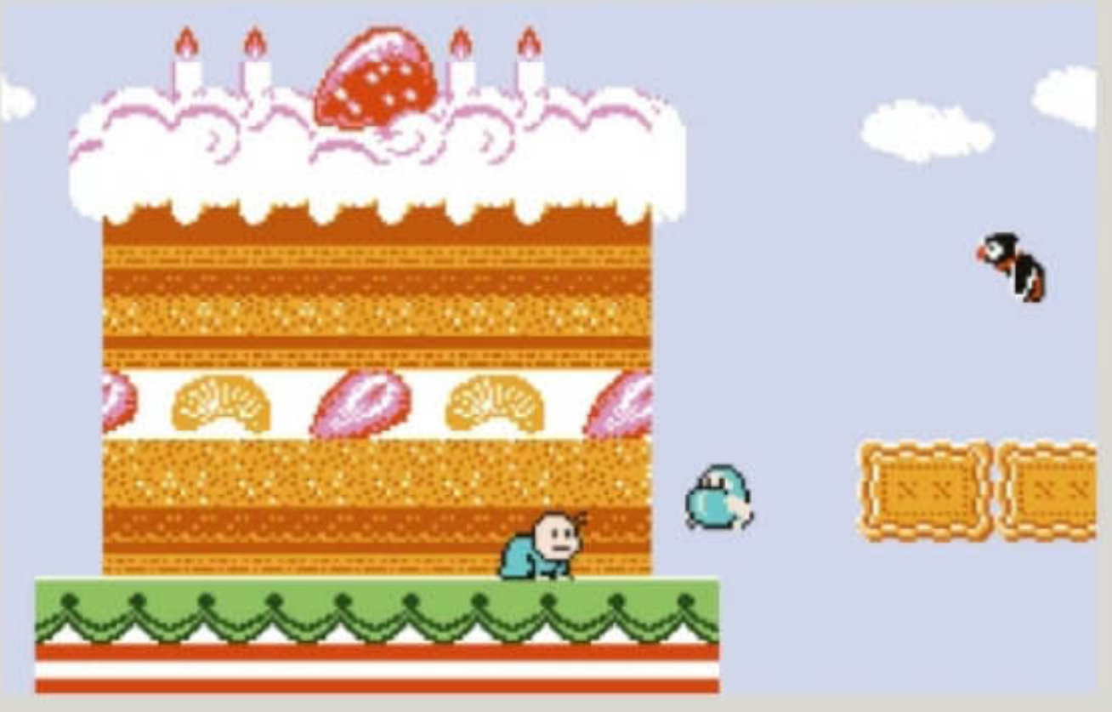
Yume Penguin Monogatari

■ While most games encourage gobbling up any leftover food, the aim of *Yume Penguin Monogatari* is to lose as much weight as possible to win back your significant other. Although incredibly easy, the platformer combined with a few shmup levels is a refreshing change from the fast-paced action we all indulge in.



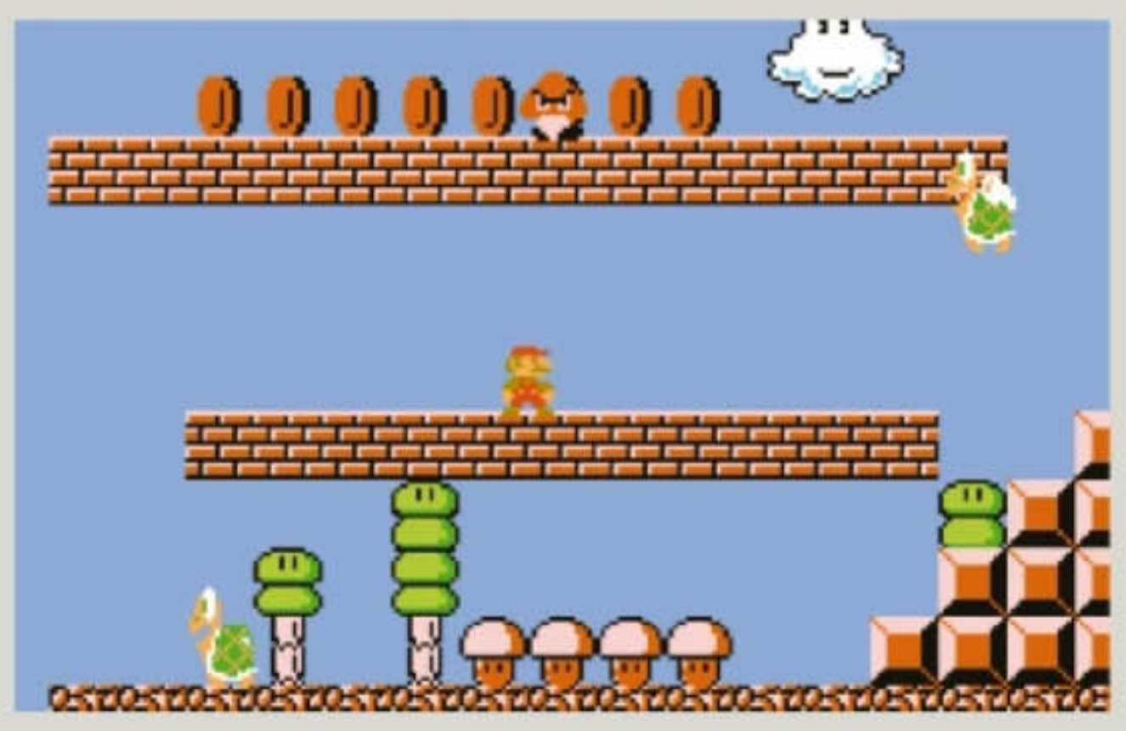
Akumajo Special: Boku Dracula-kun

■ Known as *Kid Dracula*, this adorable Famicom platformer is, in fact, a relatively obscure parody of the *Castlevania* series. Instead of assuming the role of Simon Belmont, you must take control of a super-deformed Dracula and throw the dinosaur Galamoth off your throne.



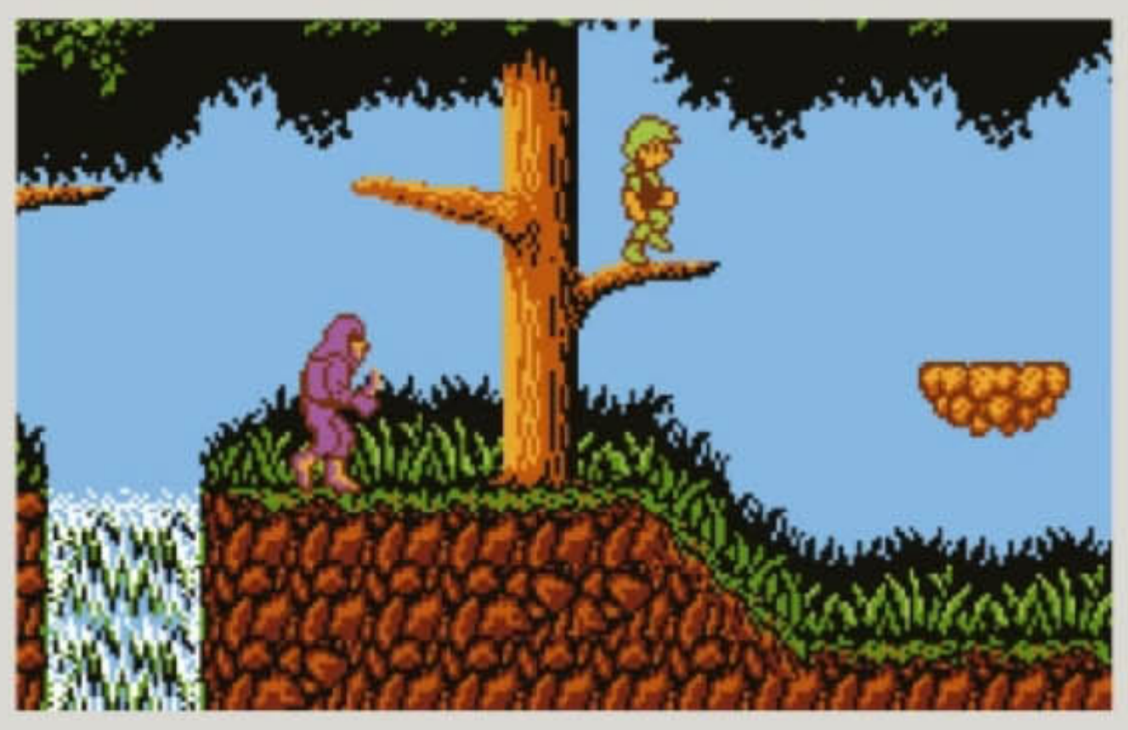
Bio Miracle Bokutte Upa

■ Unfairly dubbed as 'Baby Mario' by countless online sources, Konami's sickeningly adorable adventure has much more to it than its perceived attempt to explore the plumber's early days. With nearly every level resembling, or at least containing, various edible elements, you'll find your stomach rumbling as you progress.



Super Mario Bros 2

■ Although it was suggested to be too complex for anyone outside Japan, the true sequel to *Super Mario Bros* became a Japan-only secret – at least until the arrival of *Super Mario All-Stars*. In all fairness, the increase in difficulty between the two games was rather considerable and incredibly daunting, justifying the decision from above.



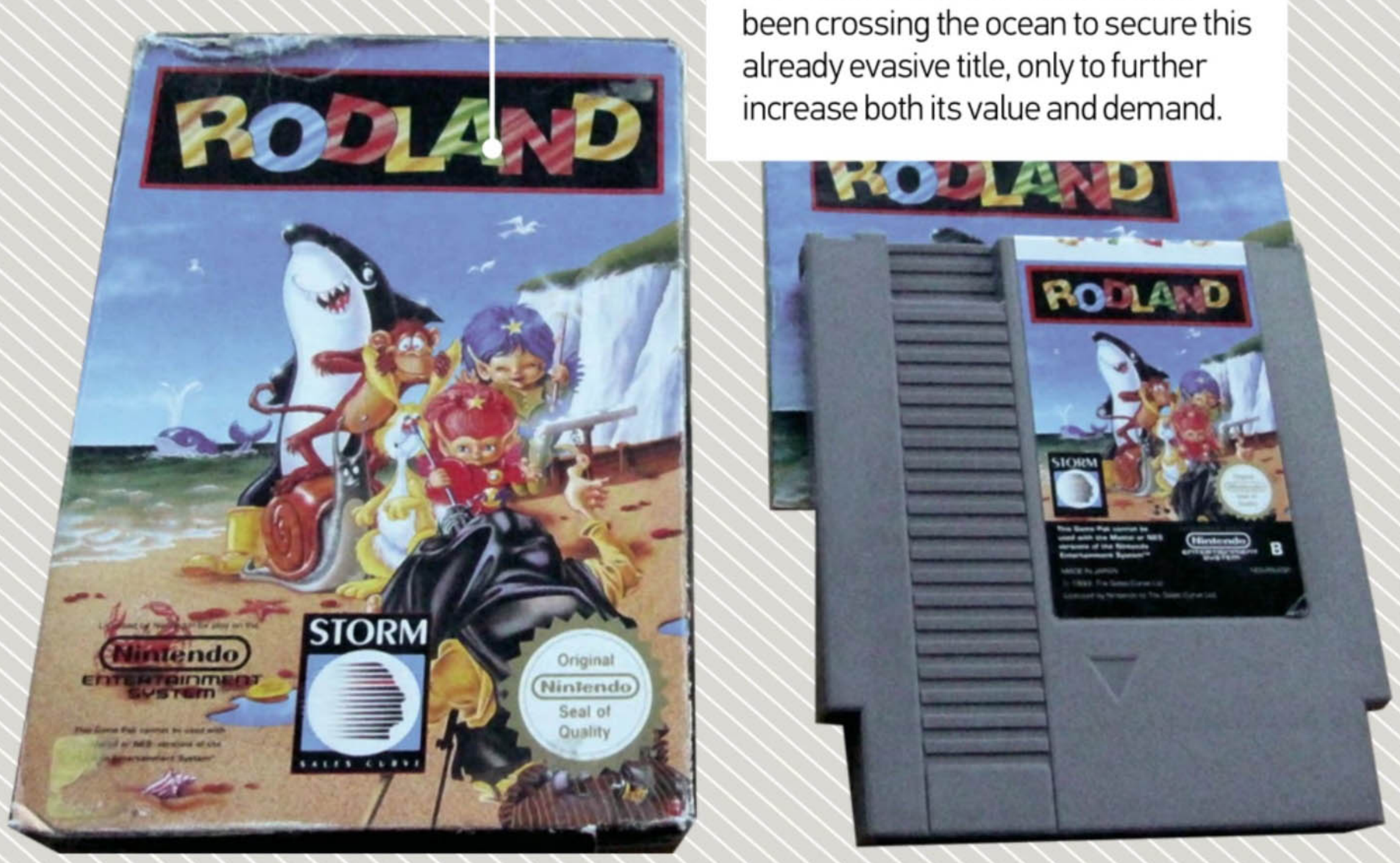
Moon Crystal

■ Taking the best mechanisms from Jordan Mechner's *Prince Of Persia*, the little-known platform adventure *Moon Crystal* not only offered solid gameplay but beautiful animation by 8-bit standards. Despite being a potential bestseller, the product of the previously unknown developer, Hect, remained a Japanese exclusive.

TOP RAREST PAL GAMES

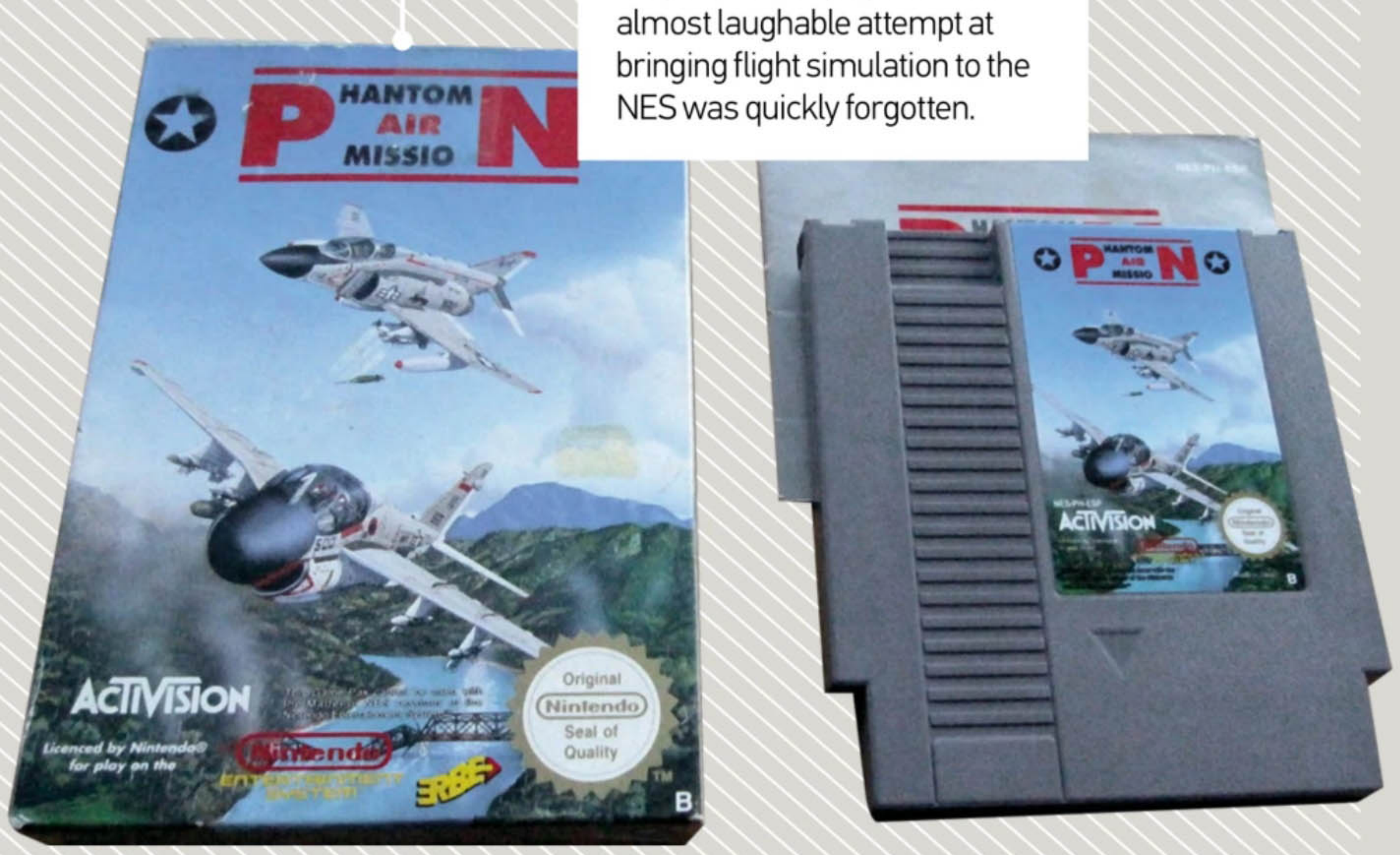
Rodland

■ Having skipped a release in America, US collectors have since been crossing the ocean to secure this already evasive title, only to further increase both its value and demand.



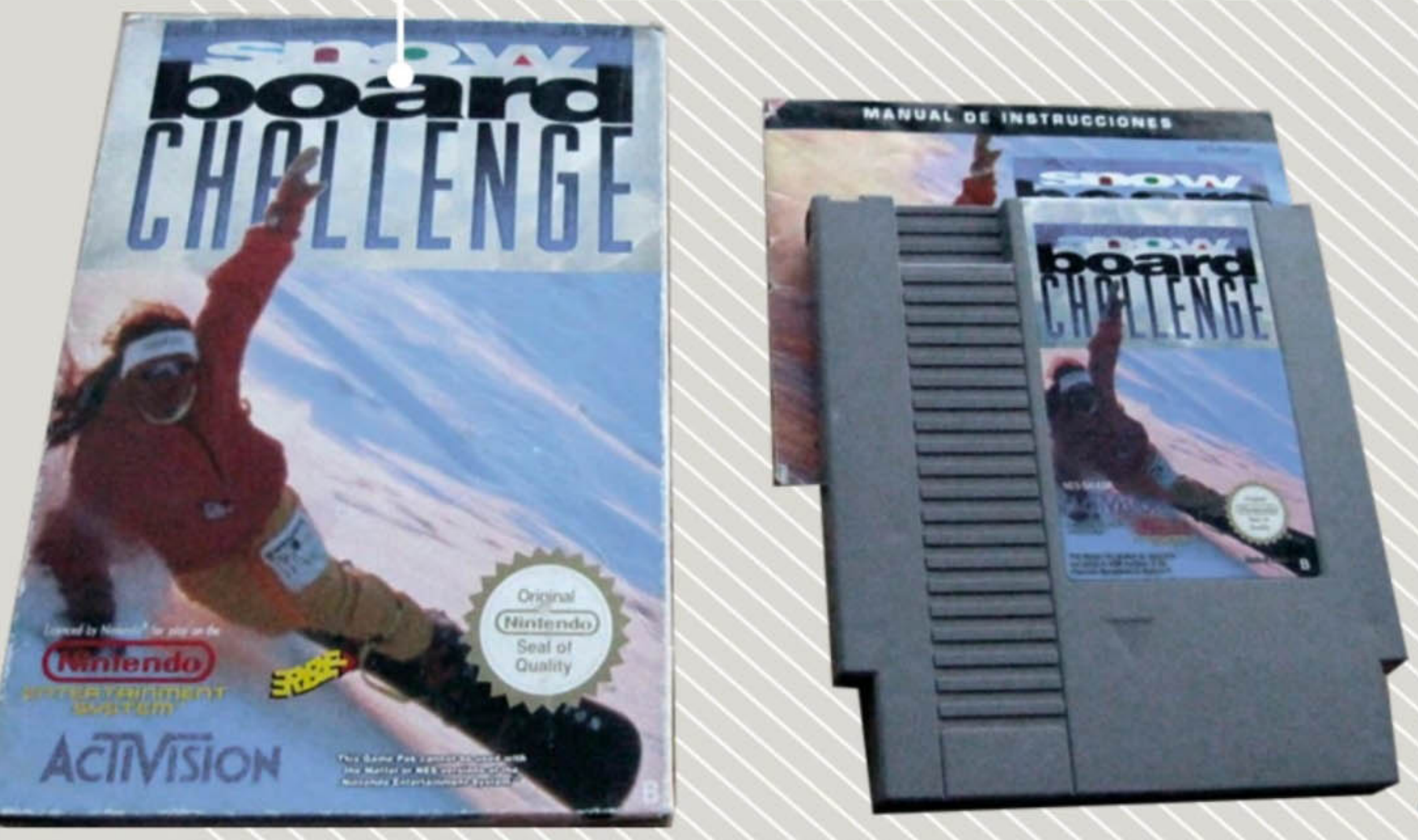
Phantom Air Mission

■ With a stupidly limited release in Spain, this unplayable and almost laughable attempt at bringing flight simulation to the NES was quickly forgotten.



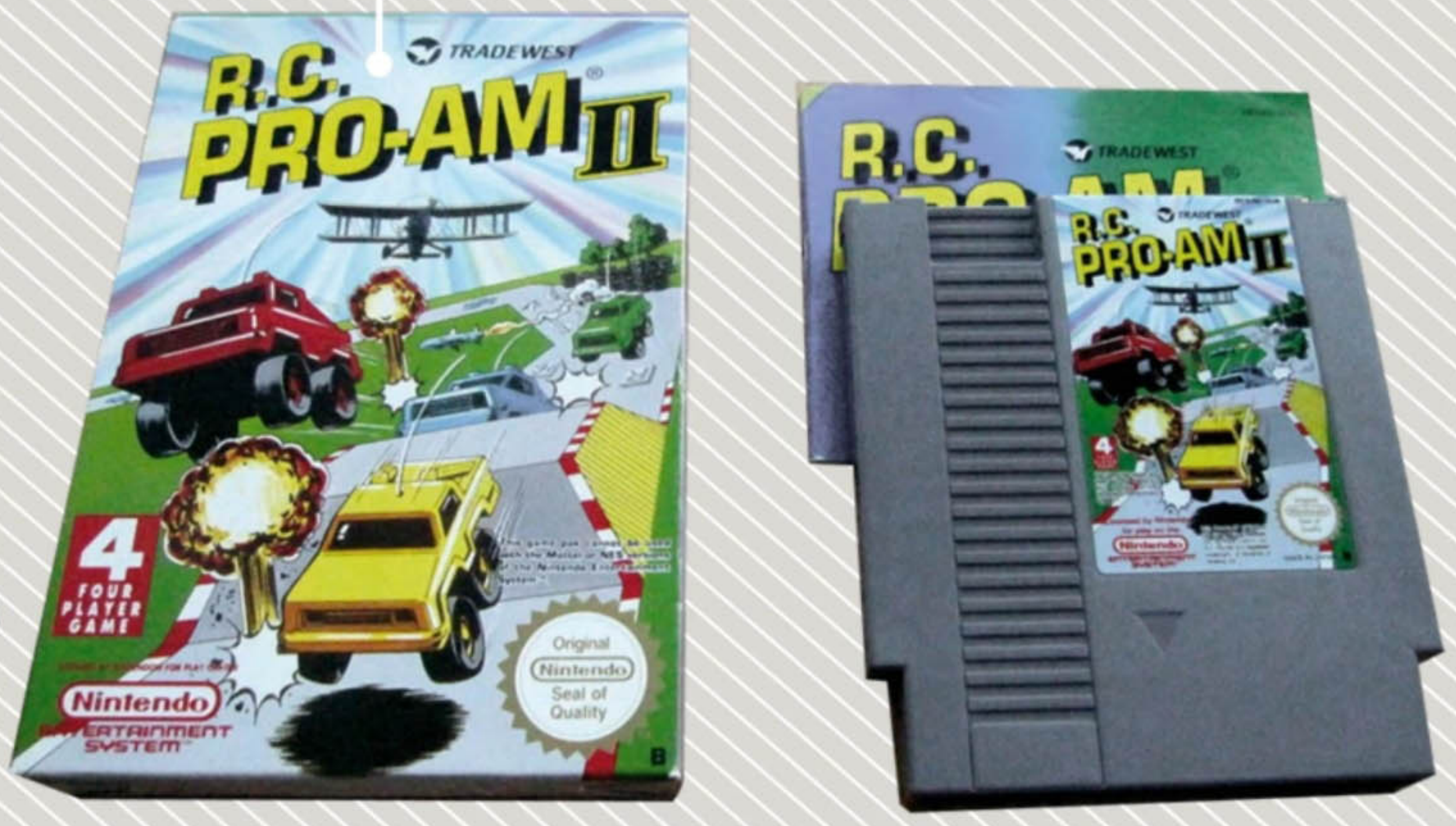
Snowboard Challenge

■ Also hailing in very limited numbers from Spain, the European localisation of *Heavy Shreddin'*, titled *Snowboard Challenge*, made next to no impact on gamers whatsoever.



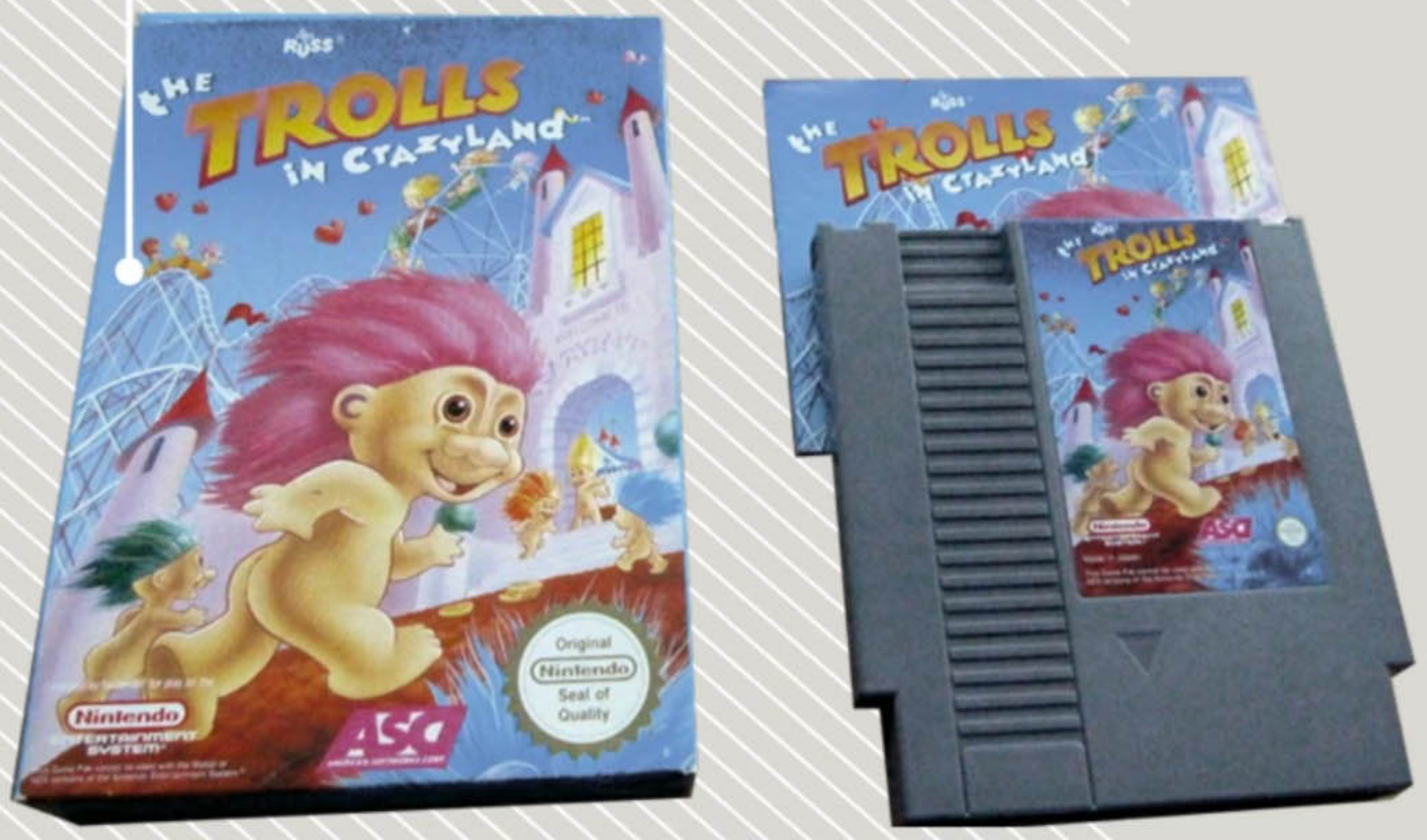
RC Pro-Am II

■ While many of the rarest videogames often attract flies, *RC Pro-Am II* stands out as a fantastic Scandinavia-exclusive sequel to one of the best NES racers.

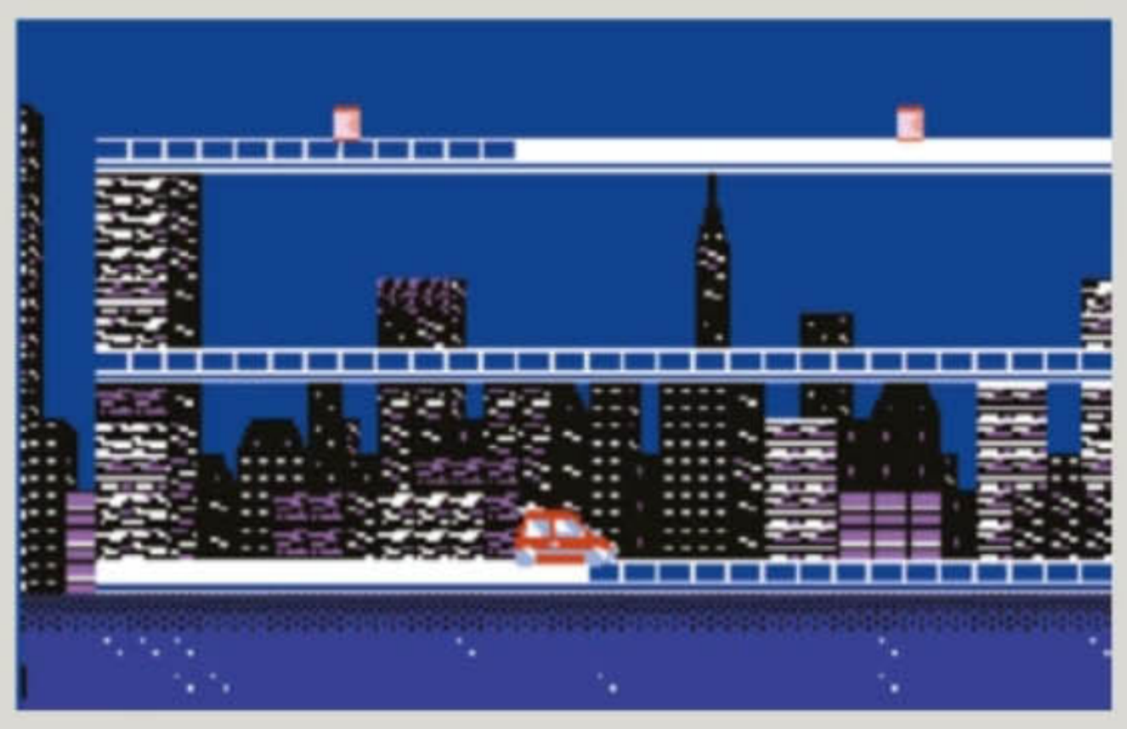


The Trolls In Crazyland

■ Although the popular fluorescent-haired dolls could once be found in every child's grasp, their 1992 outing on the NES has since become a considerable rarity.

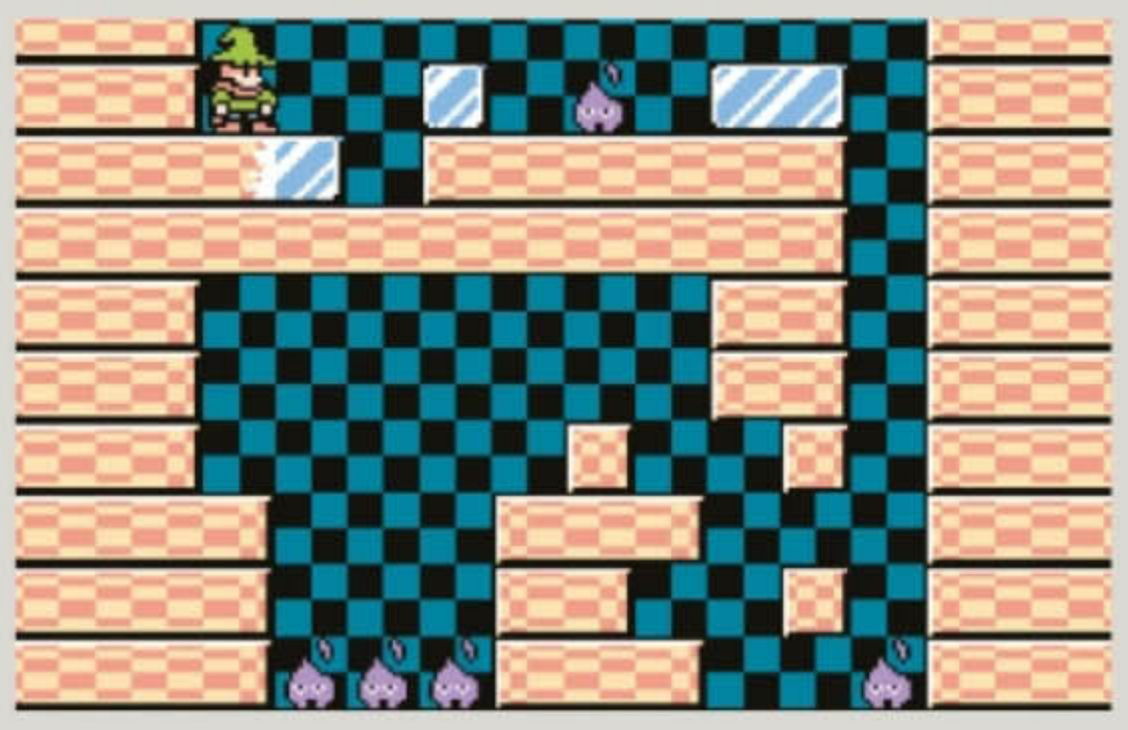


GET THESE NEXT



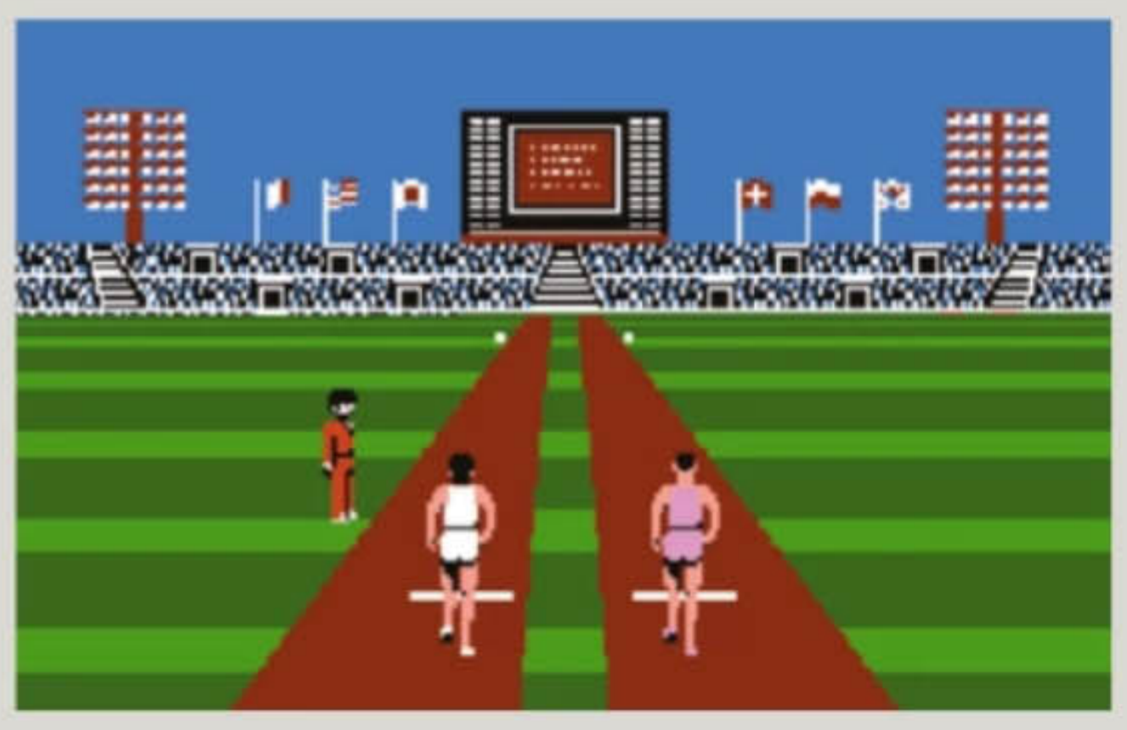
City Connection

■ If the trend of Spanish exclusives is becoming too much, look away now. *City Connection* is yet another scarce addition to the list of Spain's finest offerings. The arcade port of this bizarre car-based platformer follows the original very closely, leaving many PAL gamers puzzled as to why it wasn't sold in greater quantities.



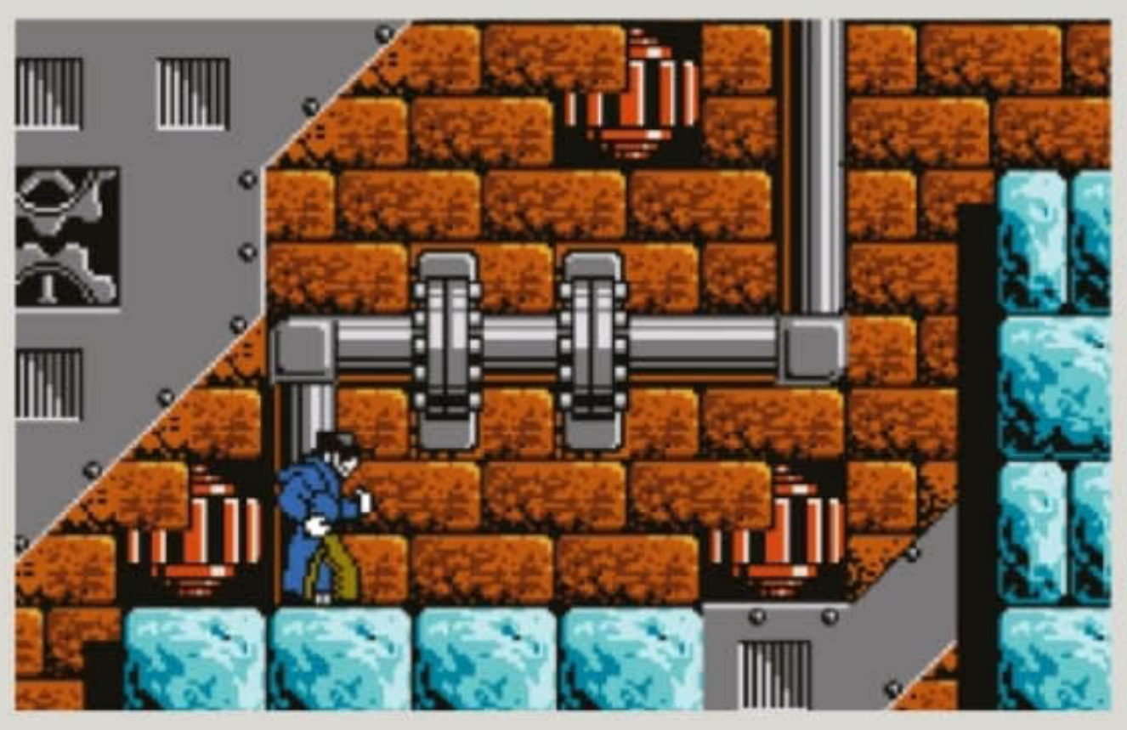
Solomon's Key 2

■ Anyone who had grown fond of the original *Solomon's Key* was in for a surprise once the follow-up arrived. Tecmo decided to reinvent the series with a prequel by dropping the block-mastering gameplay for that of a puzzle involving the elements. Germany, Scandinavia and Spain are where this oddity can be found.



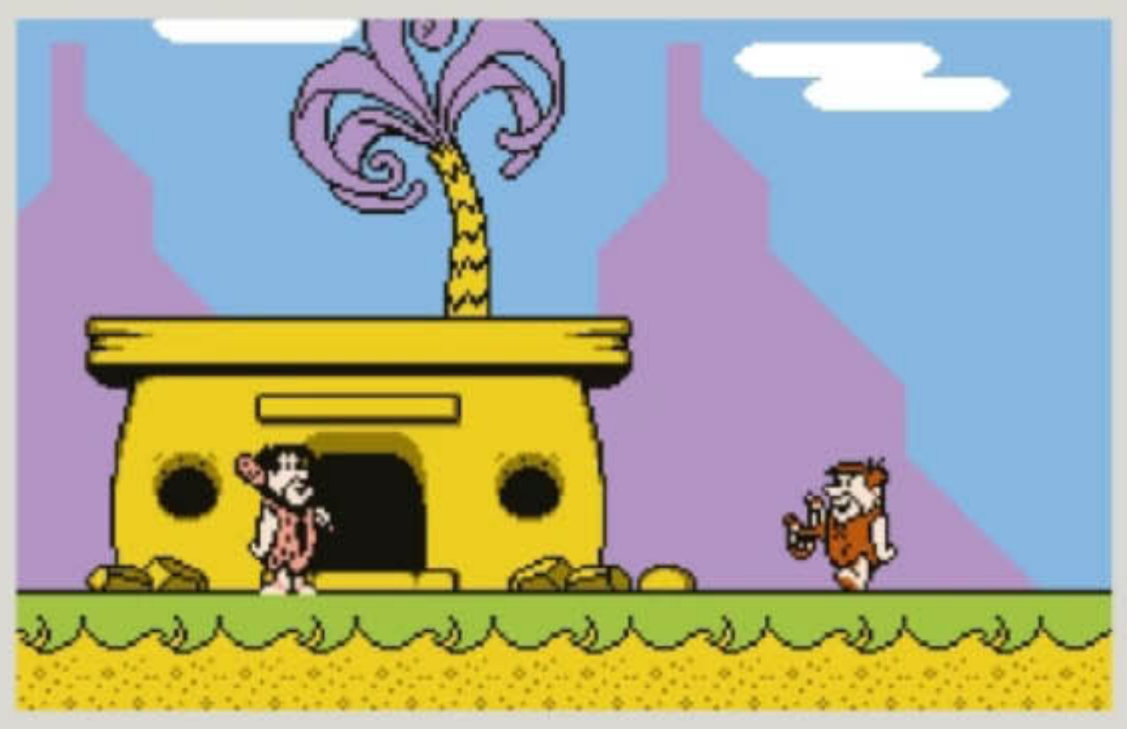
Super Mario Bros & Tetris & Nintendo World Cup

■ While you wouldn't expect a common game bundled with the NES to be here, this is a secret among die-hard collectors. There was an extremely rare boxed version released, which has quickly become the most expensive piece of Nintendo-branded cardboard around.



Darkman

■ The movie adaptation of the 1990 superhero film was developed by the British studio Ocean, only to find itself released exclusively in Spain. Going by the rest of its extensive catalogue, *Darkman* was far from one of Ocean's better offerings, perhaps explaining why this elusive release was never sold on the turf where it was developed.



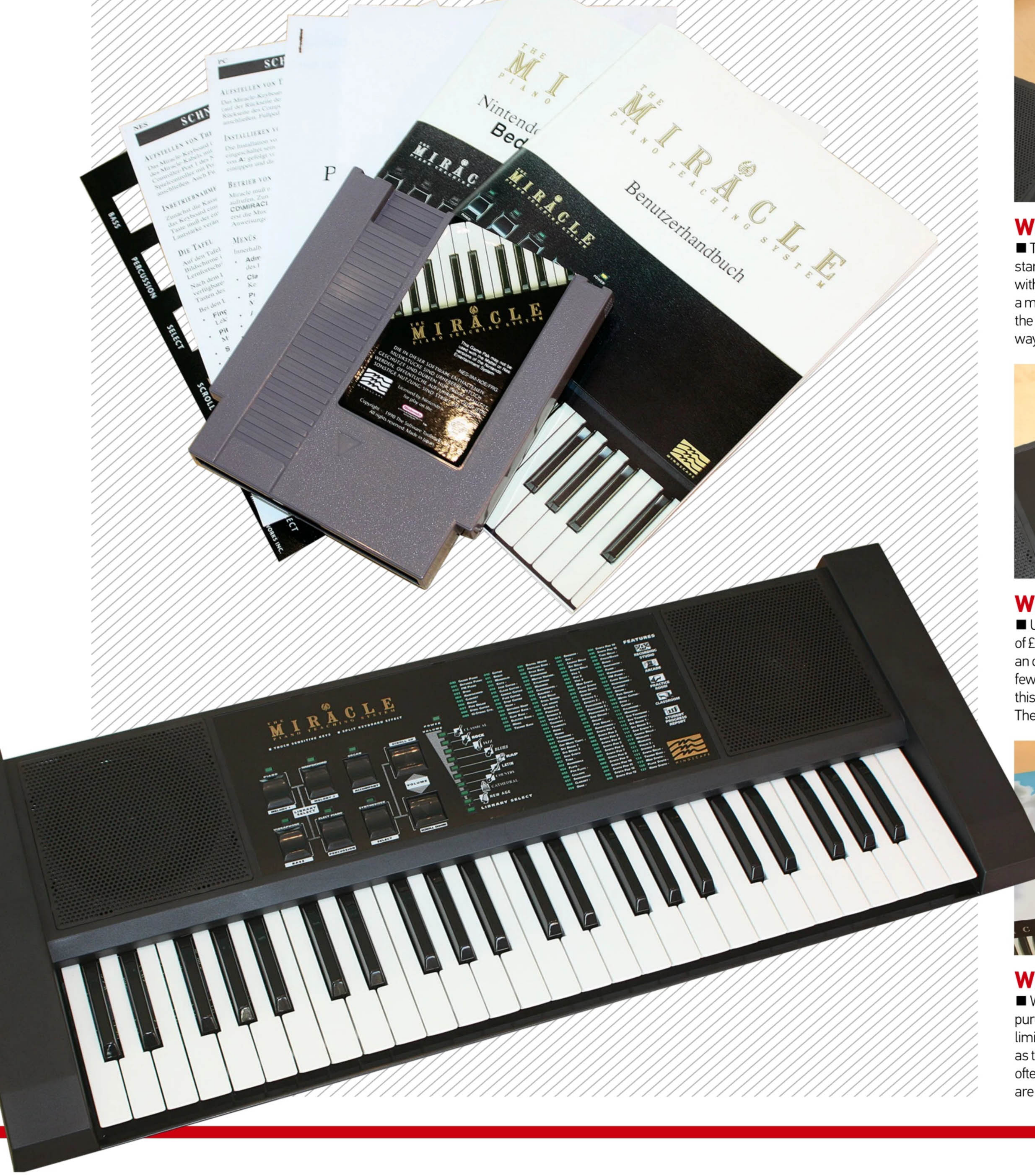
The Flintstones: The Surprise At Dinosaur Peak

■ Americans were unlucky in that *The Surprise At Dinosaur Peak* was limited to a rental release, but Europeans have faced just as much difficulty in locating retail versions. Those hoping to obtain Fred Flintstone's second adventure need to look towards Italy and Scandinavia.

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

If you're looking for a rare PAL NES game that feels genuinely unique, this is the item you should seek out for your collection

THE MIRACLE
PIANO TEACHING SYSTEM
SYSTEME D'APPRENTISSAGE DU PIANO
KLAVIERKURS
NES/PC
GERMAN


THE MIRACLE
PIANO TEACHING SYSTEM
Benutzerhandbuch
Nintendo
BASS
PERCUSSION
SELECT
SCROLL

What makes it so special?

■ The Miracle Piano Teaching System included a standalone electronic keyboard that could interact with the NES. The bundled tutoring cartridge offered a more enjoyable game-led approach to learning the piano, guiding you from nursery rhymes all the way to one of Beethoven's symphonies.

What makes it hard to find?

■ Upon release, the Miracle Piano held a retail price of £249. This price tag was too much for gamers and an octave too high for budding musicians. As very few hybrid pianist-gamers were willing to make this investment, the revolutionary product from The Software Toolworks got left behind.

THE MIRACLE
PIANO TEACHING SYSTEM
SYSTEME D'APPRENTISSAGE DU PIANO
KLAVIERKURS

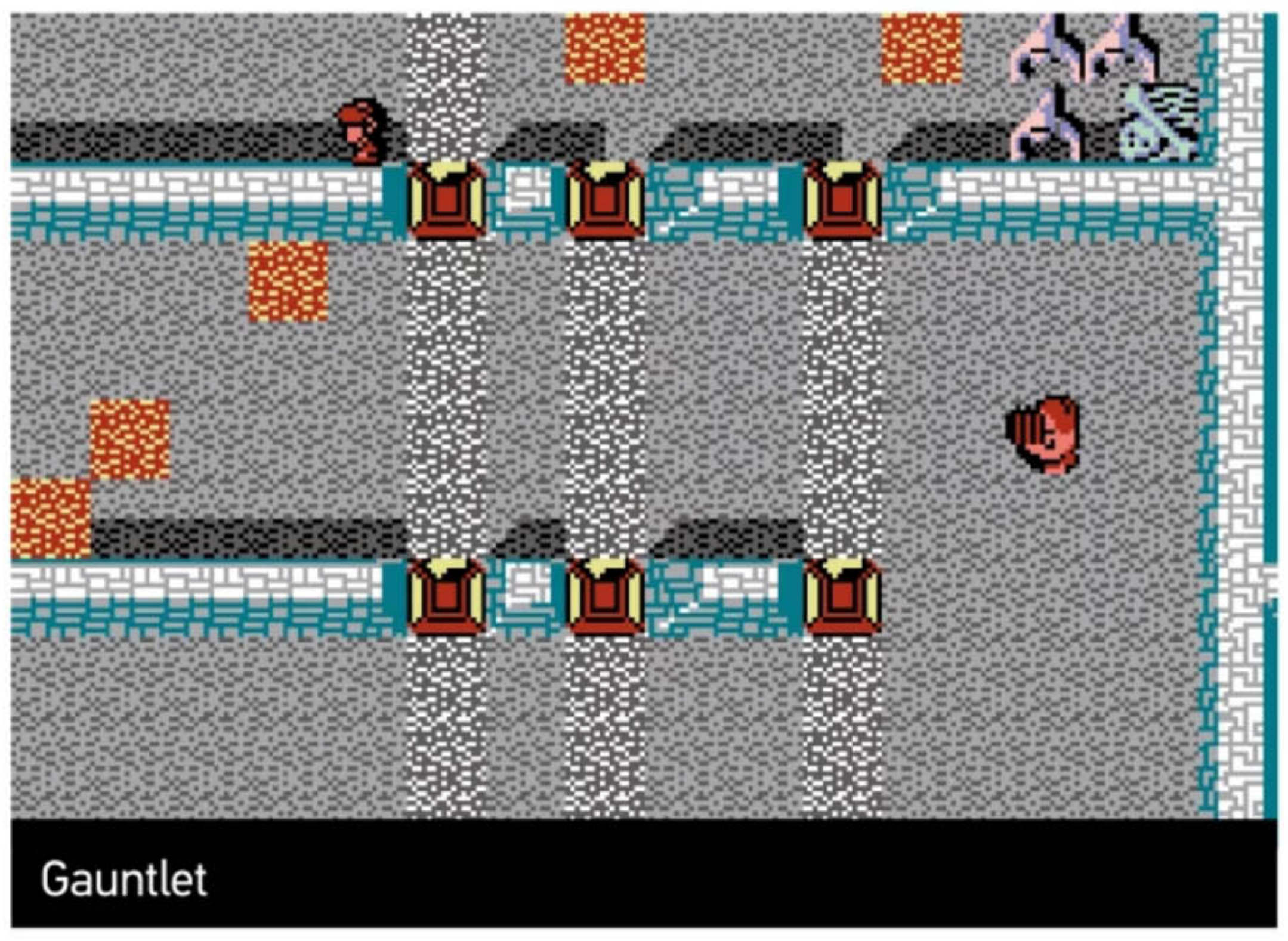
Why is it so expensive?

■ With only a handful of gamers making a purchase in 1990, few remain in circulation. This limited number, however, is only half the problem, as the mandatory cables and original packaging are often missing. The majority of these elusive items are firmly lodged in collectors' shrines.

☑ THE PAL NES GAMES YOU NEED TO OWN

A Boy And His Blob: Trouble In Blobolonia

- Action In New York ☐
- Addams Family, The ☐
- Addams Family: Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt, The ☐
- Adventures Of Lolo ☐
- Adventures Of Lolo 3 ☐
- Adventures Of Rad Gravity, The ☐
- Airwolf ☐
- Aladdin ☐
- Alpha Mission ☐
- Anticipation ☐
- Arch Rivals ☐
- Asterix ☐
- Astyanax ☐
- Athletic World ☐
- Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes ☐
- Aussie Rules Footy ☐
- Balloon Fight ☐
- Banana Prince ☐
- Barker Bill's Trick Shooting ☐
- Batman Returns ☐
- Batman: Return Of The Joker ☐
- Battle Of Olympus, The ☐
- Battletoads ☐
- Battletoads & Double Dragon ☐
- Best Of The Best Championship Karate ☐
- Bionic Commando ☐
- Blaster Master ☐
- Blue Shadow ☐
- Blues Brothers, The ☐
- Boulder Dash ☐
- Boy And His Blob: Trouble In Blobolonia, A ☐
- Bubble Bobble ☐
- California Games ☐
- Capcom's Gold Medal Challenge '92 ☐
- Captain America And The Avengers ☐
- Castlevania ☐
- Castlevania II: Simon's Quest ☐
- Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse ☐
- Championship Rally ☐
- Chevaliers Du Zodiaque: La Legende D'Or, Les ☐
- Chip 'N Dale: Rescue Rangers ☐
- Chip 'N Dale: Rescue Rangers 2 ☐
- City Connection ☐
- Clu Clu Land ☐
- Cobra Triangle ☐
- Darkman ☐
- Days Of Thunder ☐
- Déjà Vu ☐
- Devil World ☐
- Die Hard ☐
- Digger T Rock: The Legend Of The Lost City ☐
- Donkey Kong ☐
- Donkey Kong 3 ☐
- Donkey Kong Classics ☐
- Donkey Kong Jr ☐
- Donkey Kong Jr Math ☐
- Double Dragon ☐
- Double Dragon II ☐
- Double Dragon III ☐
- Double Dribble ☐
- Dr Mario ☐
- Dragon Ball ☐
- Dropzone ☐
- Duck Hunt ☐
- DuckTales ☐
- DuckTales 2 ☐
- Dynablaster ☐
- Eliminator Boat Duel ☐
- Elite ☐
- Excitebike ☐
- Faxanadu ☐
- Flintstones: The Surprise At Dinosaur Peak, The ☐
- Galaga ☐
- Galaxy 5000: Racing In The 51st Century ☐
- Gargoyle's Quest II ☐
- Gauntlet II ☐
- Goal! 2 ☐
- Golf ☐
- Goonies II, The ☐
- Gradius ☐
- Jack Nicklaus' Major Championship Golf ☐
- Guardian Legend, The ☐
- Guerilla War ☐
- Gumshoe ☐
- Gun.Smoke ☐
- Gyromite ☐
- Hammerin' Harry ☐
- Hogan's Alley ☐
- Home Alone 2: Lost In New York ☐
- Hoops ☐
- Hudson Hawk ☐
- Ice Climber ☐
- Ikari Warriors ☐
- Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade ☐
- Indy Heat ☐


Gauntlet

- Iron Tank ☐
- Isolated Warrior ☐
- Jackie Chan's Action Kung Fu ☐
- Jetsons: Cogswell's Caper, The ☐
- Jimmy Connors Tennis ☐
- Joe & Mac: Caveman Ninja ☐
- Jungle Book, The ☐
- Jurassic Park ☐
- Kick Off ☐
- Kid Icarus ☐
- Kirby's Adventure ☐
- Konami Hyper Soccer ☐
- Krusty's Fun House ☐
- Kung Fu ☐
- Legend Of Prince Valiant, The ☐
- Legend Of Zelda, The ☐
- Lemmings ☐
- Lethal Weapon ☐
- Life Force: Salamander ☐
- Little Ninja Brothers ☐
- Little Samson ☐
- Low G Man ☐
- Maniac Mansion ☐
- Marble Madness ☐
- Mario & Yoshi ☐
- Mario Bros ☐
- Mario Is Missing ☐
- Mega Man ☐
- Mega Man 2 ☐
- Mega Man 3 ☐
- Mega Man 4 ☐
- Mega Man 5 ☐
- Metal Gear ☐
- Metroid ☐
- Mighty BombJack ☐
- Mighty Final Fight ☐
- Miracle Piano Teaching System, The ☐
- Mission: Impossible ☐
- Mr Gimmick ☐
- NES Open Tournament Golf ☐
- Nigel Mansell's World Championship ☐
- Noah's Ark ☐
- North & South ☐
- Operation Wolf ☐
- Pac-Man ☐
- Panic Restaurant ☐
- Paperboy ☐
- Parasol Stars: Rainbow Islands II ☐
- Parodius ☐
- Phantom Air Mission ☐
- Pinball Quest ☐
- Popeye ☐
- Predator ☐
- Prince Of Persia ☐
- Prisoners Of War ☐
- Probotector ☐
- Probotector II: Return Of The Evil Forces ☐
- Punch-Out!! ☐
- Puzznic ☐
- RC Pro-Am ☐

EXTREMELY RARE
Games that have less than a few dozen known copies available.

VERY RARE
Very hard to come by. Expect to see only a couple of copies per year.

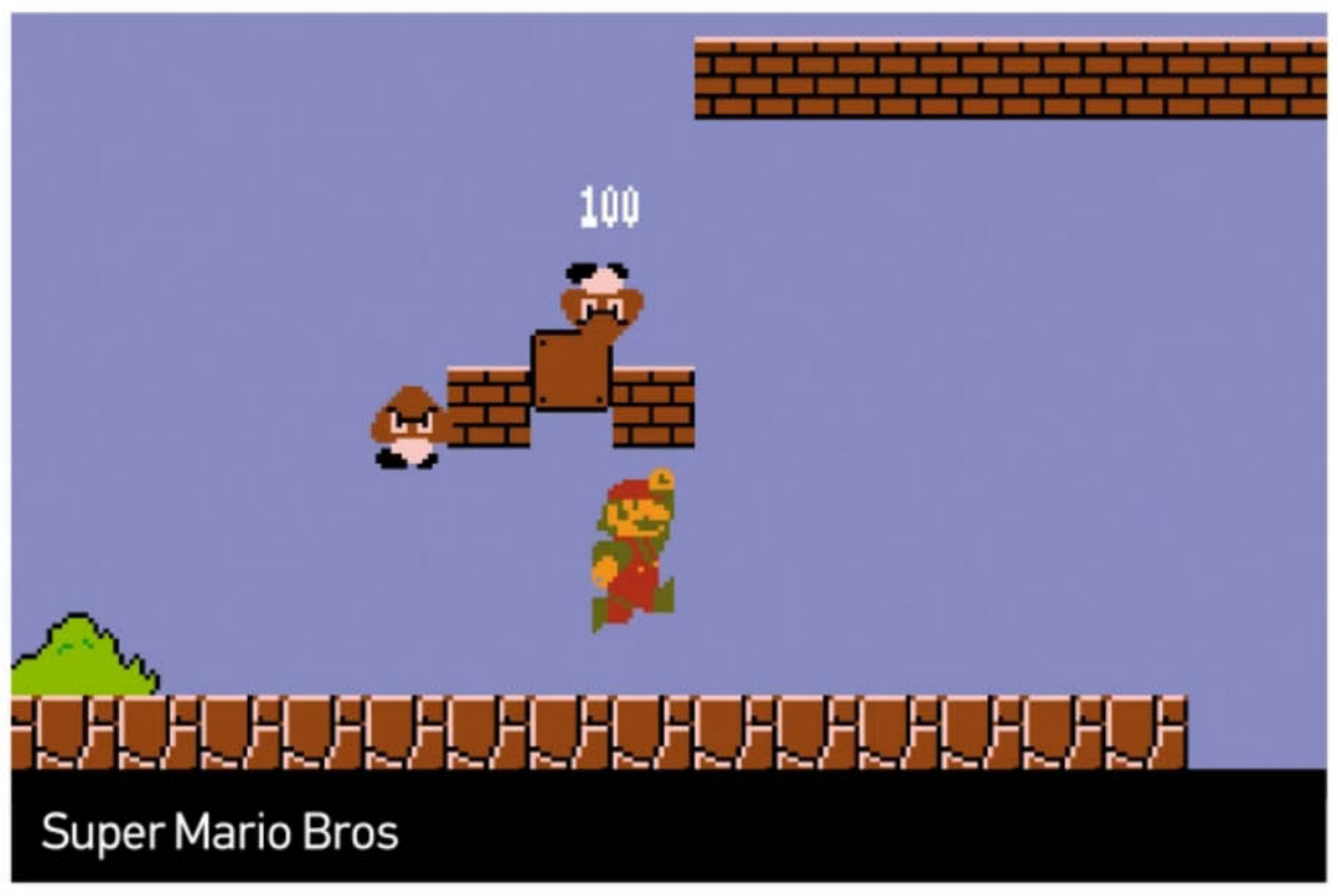
RARE
You should be able to source these in a reasonable amount of time.

UNCOMMON
You won't find them straight away, but you will after a search.

COMMON
Always just a click away for the average collector.

VERY COMMON
So common you'll find them in most bundles of games you buy.

- RC Pro-Am II ☐
- Rackets & Rivals ☐
- Rad Racer ☐
- Rainbow Islands ☐
- Rampart ☐
- RoadBlasters ☐
- RoboCop ☐
- RoboCop 2 ☐
- RoboCop 3 ☐
- Rockin' Kats ☐
- Rodland ☐
- Rollergames ☐
- Roundball ☐
- Schöne Und Das Biest (Beauty & the Beast) ☐
- Schtroumpfs, Les (Smurfs, The) ☐
- Shadow Warriors ☐
- Shadow Warriors II ☐
- Shadowgate ☐
- Shatterhand ☐
- Side Pocket ☐
- Simpsons: Bart vs The Space Mutants, The ☐
- Simpsons: Bart vs The World, The ☐
- Simpsons: Bartman Meets Radioactive Man, The ☐
- Skate Or Die ☐
- Slalom ☐
- Smash TV ☐
- Snake Rattle 'N' Roll ☐
- Snake's Revenge ☐
- Snow Brothers ☐
- Snowboard Challenge ☐
- Solar Jetman: Hunt For The Golden Warship ☐
- Solomon's Key ☐
- Solomon's Key 2 ☐
- Solstice: The Quest For The Staff Of Demnos ☐
- Spy vs Spy ☐
- Stack-Up ☐
- Stadium Events ☐
- Star Force ☐
- Star Trek: 25th Anniversary ☐
- Star Wars ☐
- Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back ☐
- StarTropics ☐
- Street Gangs ☐
- Super Mario Bros ☐
- Super Mario Bros & Duck Hunt ☐
- Super Mario Bros & Tetris & Nintendo World Cup ☐
- Super Mario Bros 2 ☐
- Super Mario Bros 3 ☐



Super Mario Bros

Wizards & Warriors

- Super Turrican ☐
- Swamp Thing ☐
- Swords & Serpents ☐
- Tecmo Cup Football Game ☐
- Tecmo World Cup Soccer ☐
- Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles ☐
- Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles II: The Arcade Game ☐
- Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles: Tournament Fighters ☐
- Tennis ☐
- Terminator, The ☐
- Tetris ☐
- Tetris 2 ☐
- Time Lord ☐
- Tiny Toon Adventures ☐
- Tiny Toon Adventures Cartoon Workshop ☐
- To The Earth ☐
- Top Gun ☐

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The Legend of Zelda

- Top Gun: The Second Mission ☐
- Total Recall ☐
- Track & Field II ☐
- Track & Field In Barcelona ☐
- Trog! ☐
- Trojan ☐
- Trolls In Crazyland, The ☐
- Turbo Racing ☐
- Ufouria: The Saga ☐
- Ultimate Air Combat ☐
- Urban Champion ☐
- Volleyball ☐
- Wario's Woods ☐
- Werewolf: The Last Warrior ☐
- Wild Gunman ☐
- Willow ☐
- Wizards & Warriors ☐
- Wizards & Warriors II: Iron Sword ☐
- Wizards & Warriors III ☐
- World Champ ☐
- World Wrestling ☐
- Wrath Of The Black Manta ☐
- Wrecking Crew ☐
- WWF King Of The Ring ☐
- WWF WrestleMania ☐
- WWF WrestleMania Challenge ☐
- WWF WrestleMania: Steel Cage Challenge ☐
- Xevious ☐
- Yoshi's Cookie ☐
- Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link ☐
- Zen: Intergalactic Ninja ☐

* For a complete list of PAL NES games, visit www.retrocollect.com

The NES Book
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LIFE
LOOK, LOOK!!

Welcome to

The Super NES Book

Nintendo had its work cut out with the release of its Super NES. While it had dominated the 8-bit generation with its NES, Sega already had a 14-month head start with its own 16-bit console, and a host of arcade exclusives from Sega and third-party publishers. Nintendo fought back in fine style and while the fight was far closer than the previous generation, the Super NES eventually pulled ahead as both consoles reached the end of their commercial lives. Assisted by its fabled use of Mode 7 and hits such as *Super Mario World*, *Secret Of Mana*, *Street Fighter 2* and *Axelay*, Nintendo's machine won over the public and it remains an essential console for any collector, delivering a diverse range of games that few other systems of the time could hope to match. With that in mind we've taken this opportunity to celebrate some of the console's finest games. So, pull up a comfy chair and prepare to relive the golden years of the Super NES.

POWER
EJECT
RESET
Nintendo
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

In association with retro GAMER magazine

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The Super NES Book Contents

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OVER 20 YEARS OF CLASSIC GAMING

96 RETROINSPECTION: SUPER NINTENDO

The Super NES was Nintendo's answer to its world-conquering NES. Discover how it created a 16-bit masterpiece

100 PERFECT TEN: SUPER NINTENDO

There's a fantastic array of games on Nintendo's 16-bit machine, but you won't go far wrong if you pick these beauties

102 AND THE REST: SUPER NINTENDO

Brush off those rose-tinted spectacles as we look at some of the best and worst found on Nintendo's classy console

104 RETRO REVIVAL: SUPER STREET FIGHTER II TURBO

Flex your fingers and get ready to play one of the best one-on-one fighters for Nintendo's console

106 MAKING OF THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

Refreshing the series for a new generation was a challenge

114 CLASSIC MOMENTS: WILD GUNS

All the best bits from Natumse's incredible shooter

116 THE MAKING OF SUPER METROID

Yoshio Sakamoto explains how he turned Samus Arun's 16-bit adventure into the best Metroid game of all time

122 PERIPHERAL VISION: THE SNES CONTROLLER

Discover why Nintendo's 16-bit controller remains one of the best you'll get your hands on

124 CLASSIC GAME: CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WARS

Why you need Konami's hectic and fun run-'n'-gun sequel in your life

126 MODE 7 HEAVEN

Discover the games that made the best use of Nintendo's graphics mode

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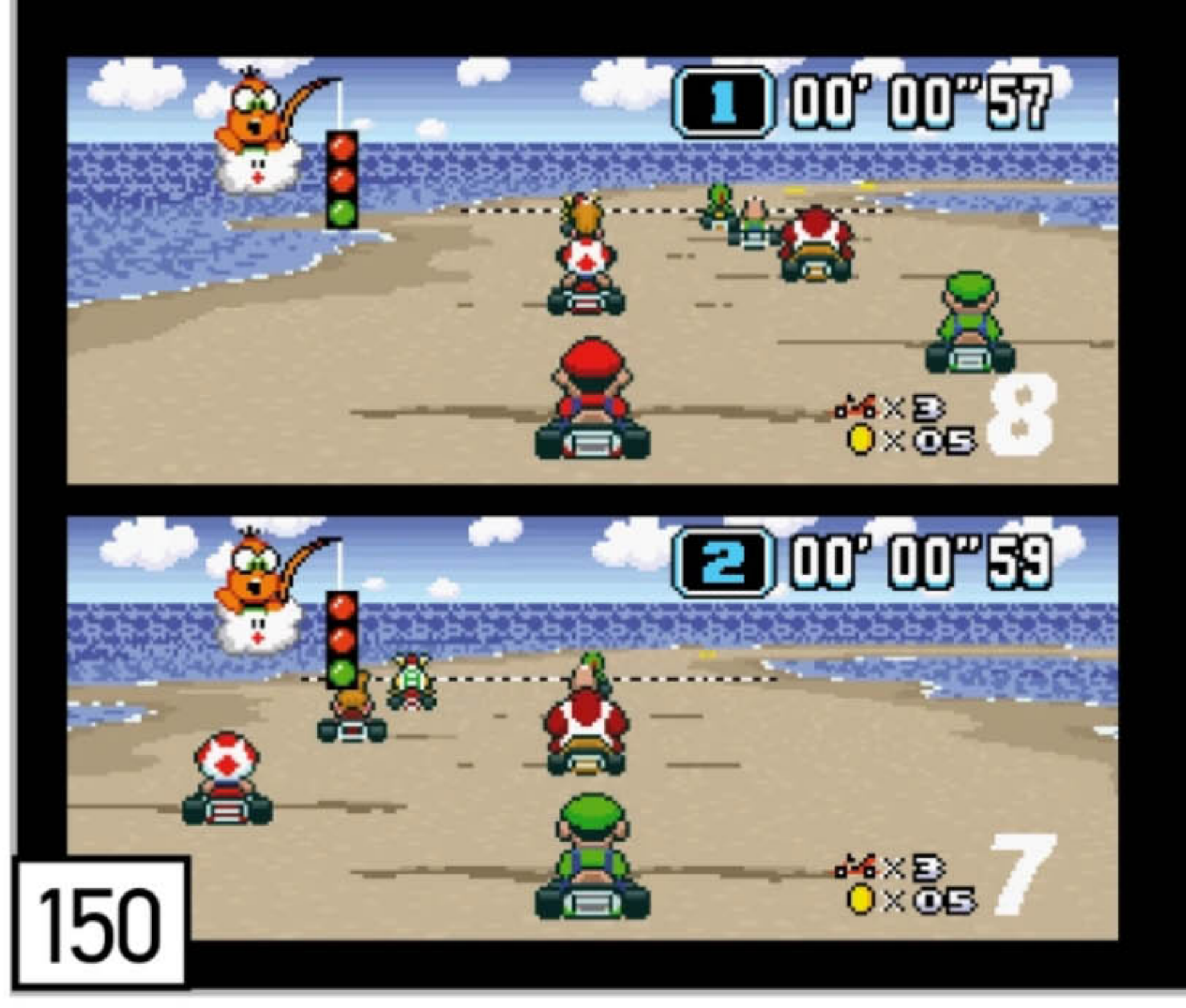
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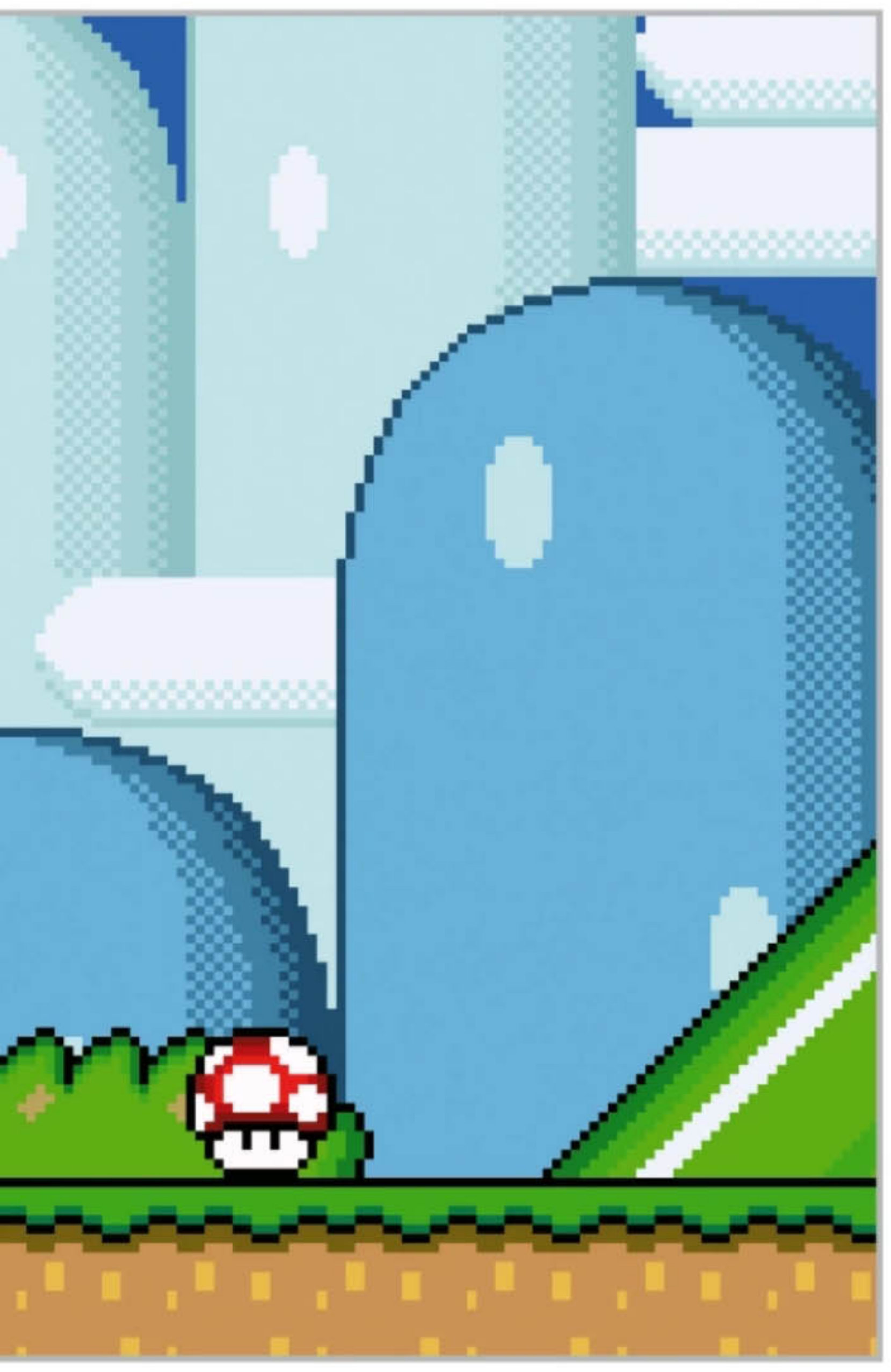

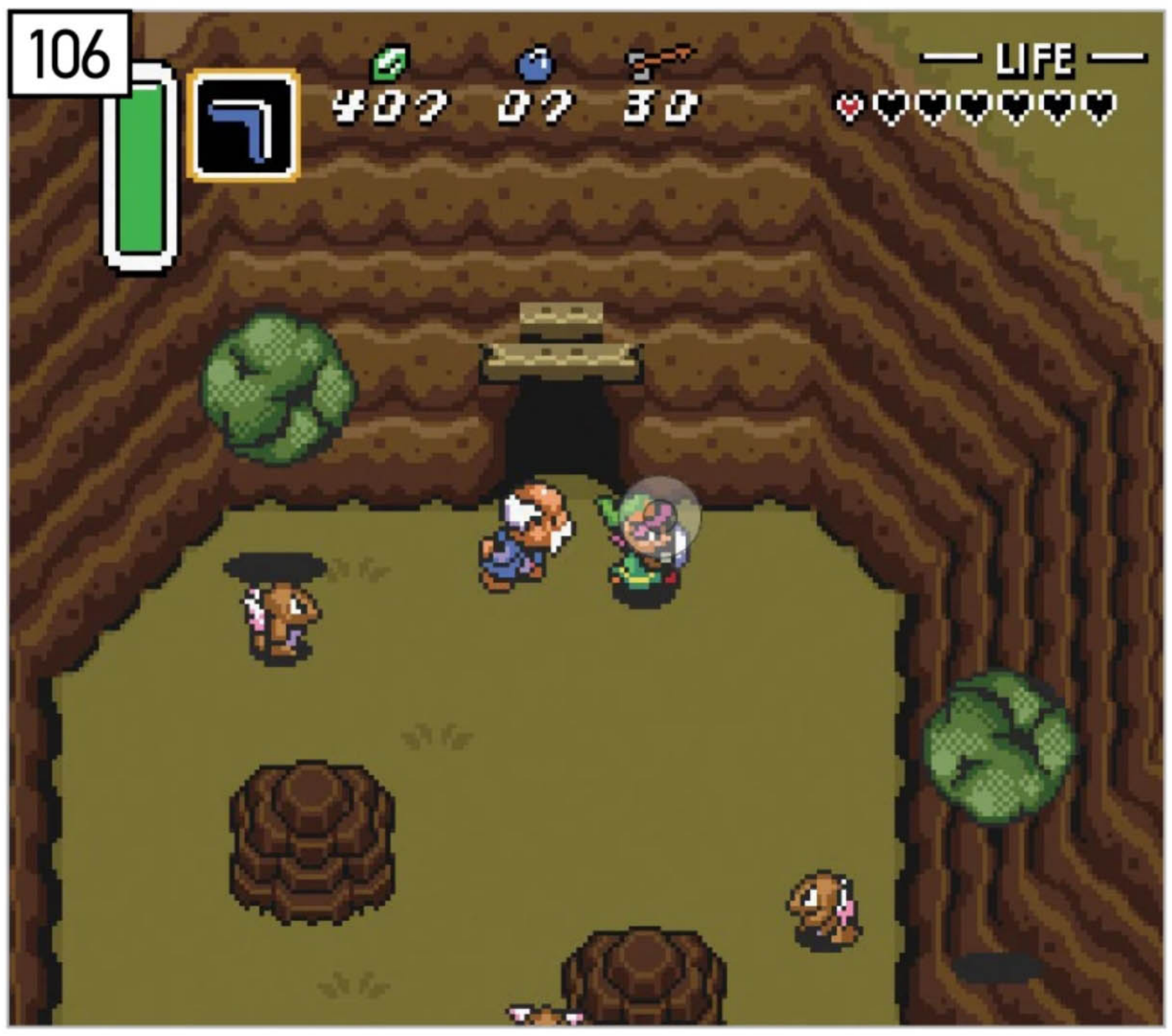

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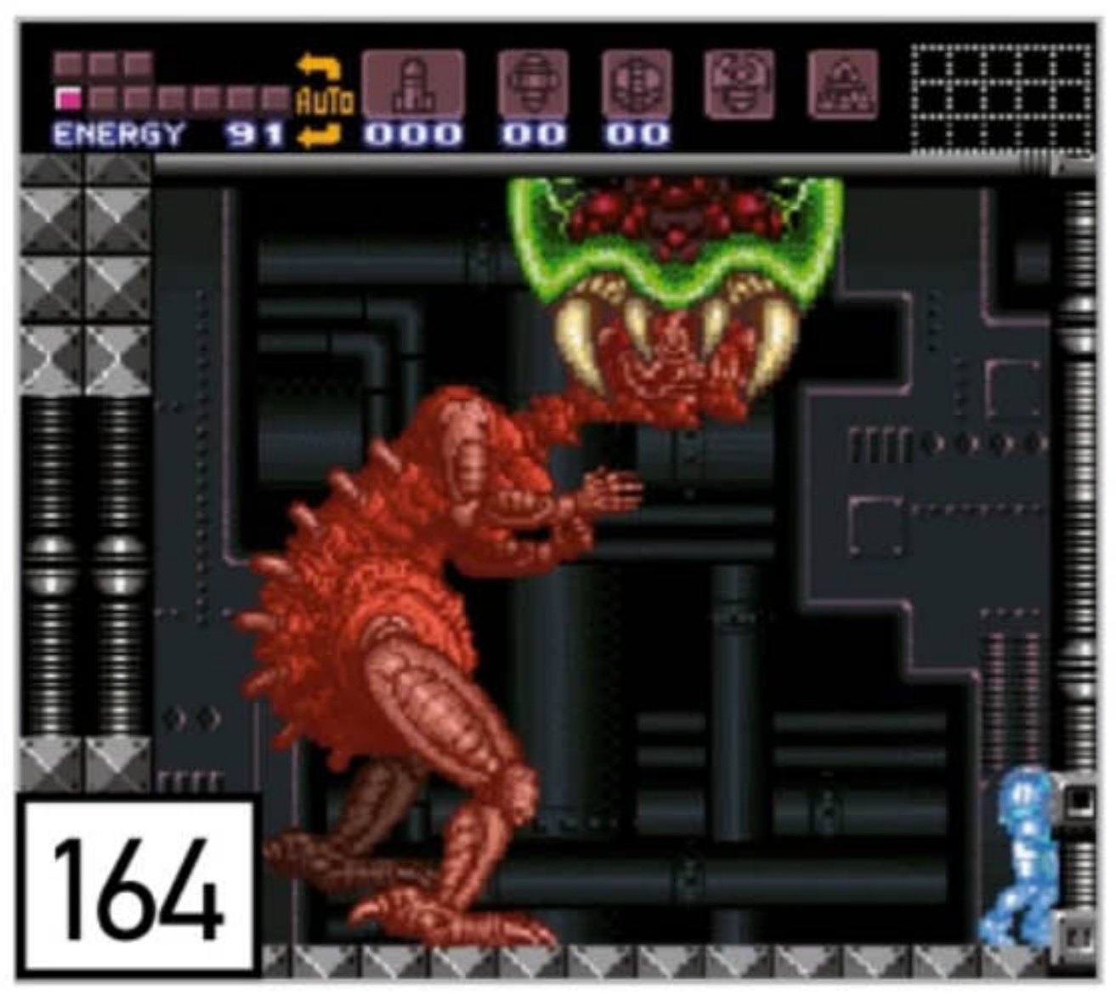
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POWER
EJECT
RESET
Nintendo
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

SUPER NES CONTROL SET
SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
PAL VERSION
CAPCOM
EJECT
RESET
POWER
SELECT
START
Y
B

Year Released: Japan: 1990 USA: 1991 UK: 1992

Original Price: Japan: 25,000 Yen USA: $199 UK: £149.99 (INCLUDING SUPER MARIO WORLD)

Buy it now for: £25+ ($40+)

Associated Magazines: Nintendo Magazine System, Superplay, Total, N-Force, SNES Force

Why the SNES was great… Nintendo's 16 bit powerhouse represents the true "Golden Age" of videogaming as the likes of Konami, Squaresoft and even Nintendo itself have arguably never been on better form than when designing games for this machine. The best SNES releases featured both flawless gameplay and graphics and set a high benchmark for quality entertainment software that, in many cases, endures to this day.

SNES

BY RELEASING THE SUPER NES A YEAR LATER THAN ITS NEAREST RIVALS, NINTENDO FACED THE DAUNTING TASK OF CONVERTING A GENERATION OF GAMERS TO ITS NEW CONSOLE. IT COULD HAVE GONE HORRIBLY WRONG BUT, AS WE REVEAL, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE IF YOU HAVE THE BEST GAMES

With a NES in thirty per cent of American homes and the word 'Famicom' synonymous with videogames in Japan, Nintendo was understandably reluctant to release a successor to its best selling console and chose to support the ageing 8-bit console for as long as it could. It was, however, only a matter of time before the advance of technology allowed Nintendo's competition to take the lead and by 1988 both NEC's PC Engine and Sega's Mega Drive offered a far more powerful entertainment experience. Nintendo could no longer rest on its laurels and secretly began work on its next 'Family Computer': the Super Famicom.

The 16-bit-system had been developed and designed by Masayuki Uemura, who had spent months attempting to make the Super Famicom backwards compatible with Famicom cartridges but had found that the massive leap in technology had set Nintendo's machine so far in advance of its predecessor that building in Famicom compatibility would have been far too costly. Without backwards compatibility to bridge the transition between consoles, Nintendo would need an irresistible launch line-up to tempt existing Famicom owners to upgrade. Knowing this, Nintendo's president, Hiroshi Yamauchi needed his best man on the job and, as soon as development of *Super Mario Bros 3* was complete, he charged Shigeru Miyamoto and his thirty-man team with the task of exploring the new hardware's game-playing capabilities.

One of the biggest tricks that the hardware had up its sleeve was the now infamous Mode 7: a graphical hardware mode that allowed sprites to zoom in and out and rotate in a way that simulated a 3D depth-of-field effect. Neither the Mega Dive nor PC Engine was

To CD or not CD?

Wishing to exploit the advantages of the growing CD-ROM medium, Nintendo had planned a SNES CD-ROM drive from as early as 1988 and had courted both Sony and Phillips with the proposal. The fruits of those early endeavours were a series of Nintendo licensed games for the Phillips CDI and a prototype add-on from Sony that was eventually developed into the PlayStation we know today. If Nintendo had not backed out of the SNES/PlayStation partnership then the videogame landscape would be unrecognisable and this RetroInspection might tell the tale of a very different console. It is unclear how many games were in development for the SNES-CD but we do know that *Secret Of Mana* was originally CD-based with a planned branching story. The game had to be dramatically cut back to fit on cartridge: a process that was instrumental in convincing Squaresoft to move *Final Fantasy VII* from N64 to PlayStation.

» *Secret Of Mana* started off as a CD title, complete with branching storylines.

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
SELECT
START
X
Y
A
B

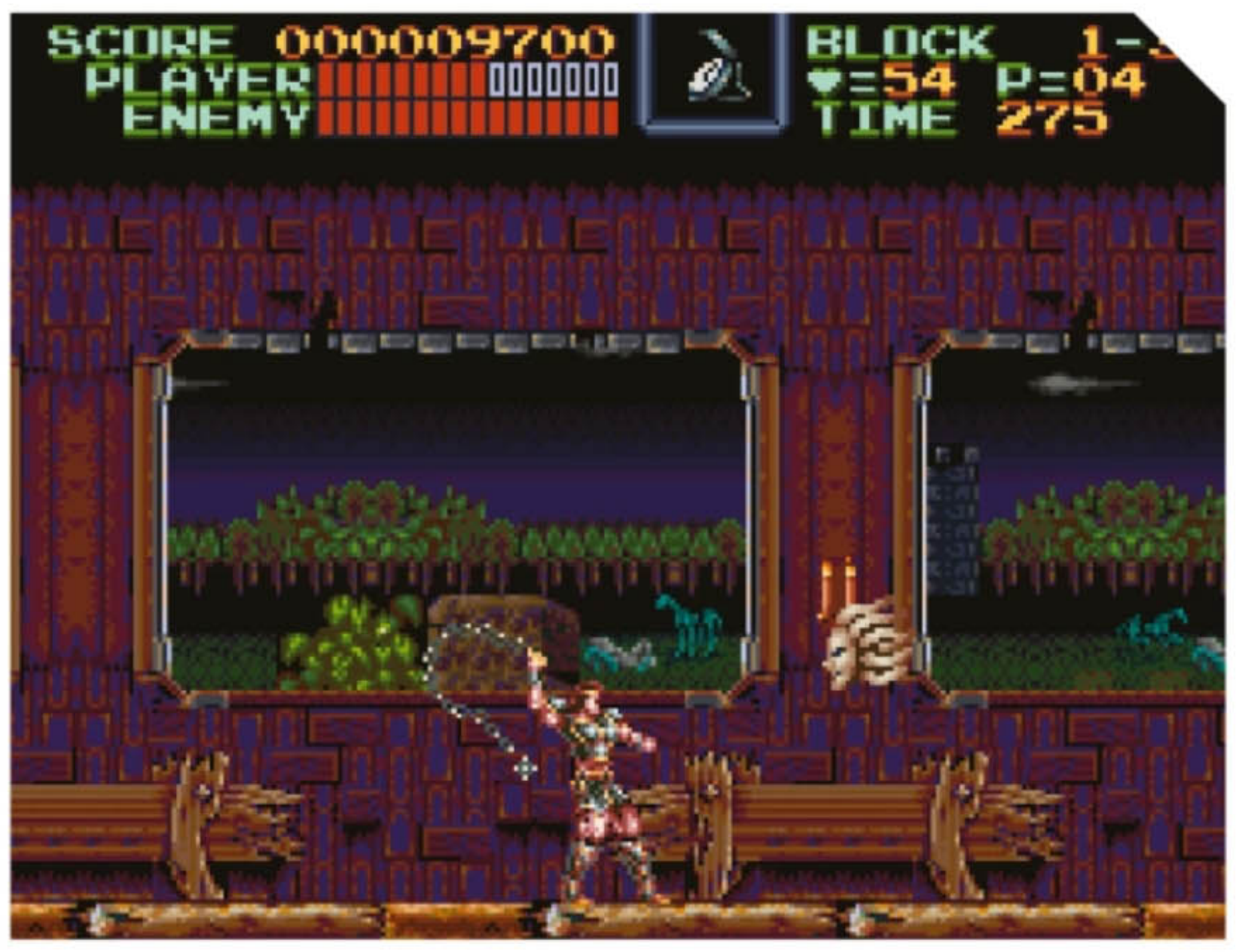
» The Japanese packaging evoked a playful image that was missing from the mature design of the console.

» The SNES Jr made it to the USA but its rarity makes it much easier to find the Japanese version.

capable of sprite scaling on such a level so Nintendo decided that the first three Super Famicom games would take advantage of the innovative feature. After 15 solid months of R&D, Miyamoto and Co would begin work on *F-Zero*, *Pilotwings* and *Super Mario Bros 4*, which would all use Mode 7 to varying degrees. However, with only ten months until launch day, the team was only able to complete two of the games on time and *Pilotwings* (the most technically demanding of the three) slipped by a month.

By 20 November 1990, Japanese demand for Nintendo's new console had reached fever-pitch and any worries that the machine would fail to entice existing Famicom owners were washed away. Demand for the console was so high that, for example, the Hankyu department store in Osaka had to stop taking preorders only a week after they started. In retrospect the release of the Super Famicom heralded the age of hysteria that has defined every hardware launch to this day. By 20 November, total pre-orders numbered in excess of 1.5 million yet only 300,000 machines shipped. Fearing that several Yakuza groups planned to hijack the Super Famicom shipment, to sell on at artificially inflated prices, Nintendo commenced 'Operation Midnight Shipping' in which the entire batch of 300,000 machines were hauled across Japan in the very early hours of the 20th. Thanks to these dramatic efforts, the launch was a rousing success: the Super Famicom sold out in seconds, even with only two launch titles. Yet when one of those titles was the sequel to the best selling game of all time, success was a certainty. Despite being the least technically demanding of the Super Famicom's launch titles it was *Super Mario Bros 4: Super Mario World* that shifted the machine. *Super Mario World* expanded on its predecessors by offering finely tuned platforming gameplay, beautiful pastel graphics and a staggering 79 levels. The game is still remembered, 16 years on, as the best 2D platform game of all time so it is no surprise that Nintendo relied on it to push sales of their console.

When it came time to introduce the renamed Super Nintendo Entertainment System to the UK (a typical 17 months after the Japanese release) Nintendo made the bold decision to bundle *Super Mario World* with every SNES console. Making for one of the best freebies of all time, *Mario* helped to move many a SNES into British living rooms that summer, but arriving two years after the Mega Drive proved very costly. Sega's black beauty was phenomenally popular in Europe (thanks to its exclusive sports simulations and arcade conversions) and left little room for competition. It wasn't until Christmas of 1992 that the tide truly began to turn, thanks to Capcom's *Street Fighter II*. The original arcade game had spawned a worldwide craze, the likes of which had not been seen since the days of *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders*, and whichever home console netted a conversion first would benefit from a serious rise in sales. Sure enough, Nintendo managed to snag Capcom's seminal brawler a full year before Sega and stole a significant slice of the UK market in the process. A pattern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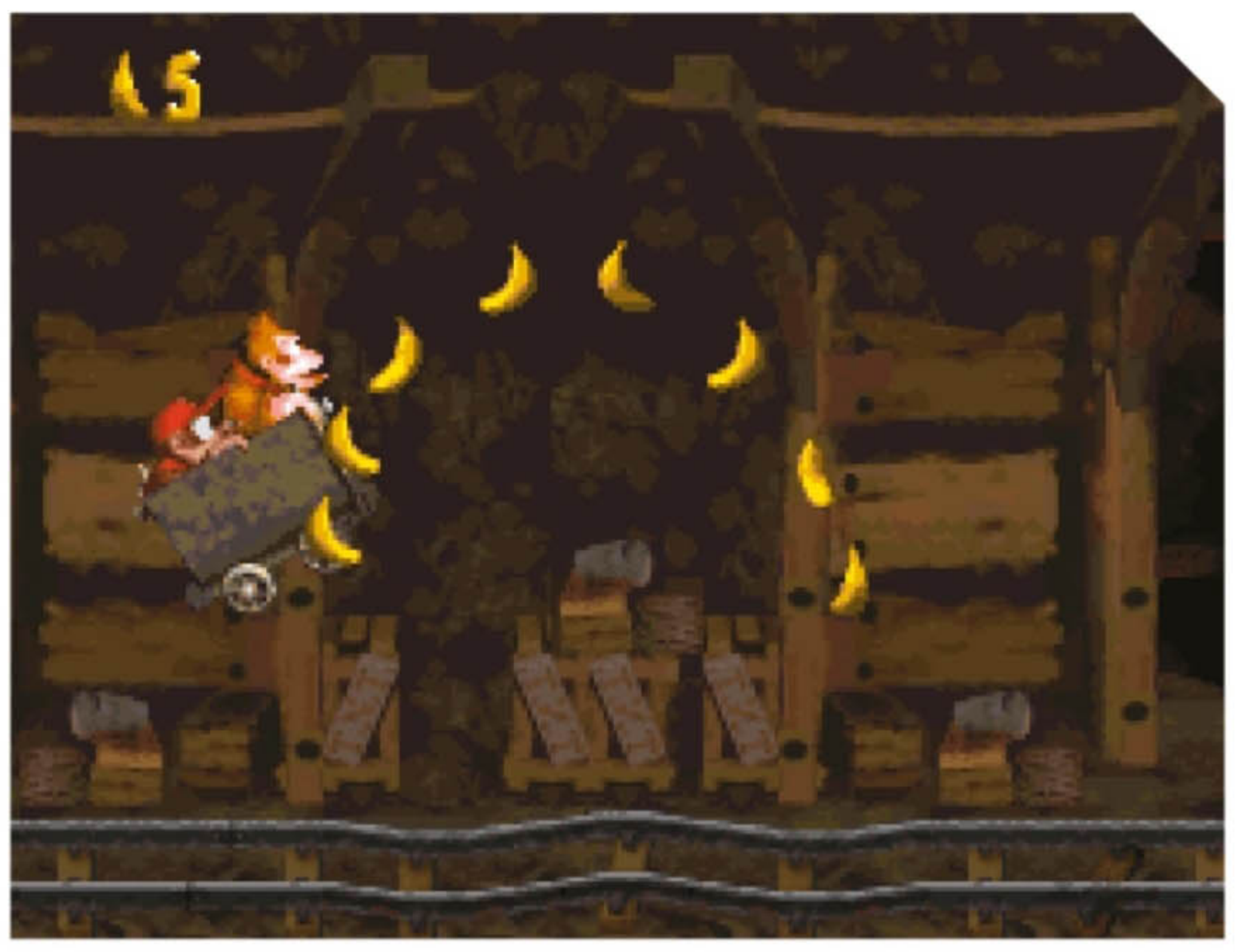
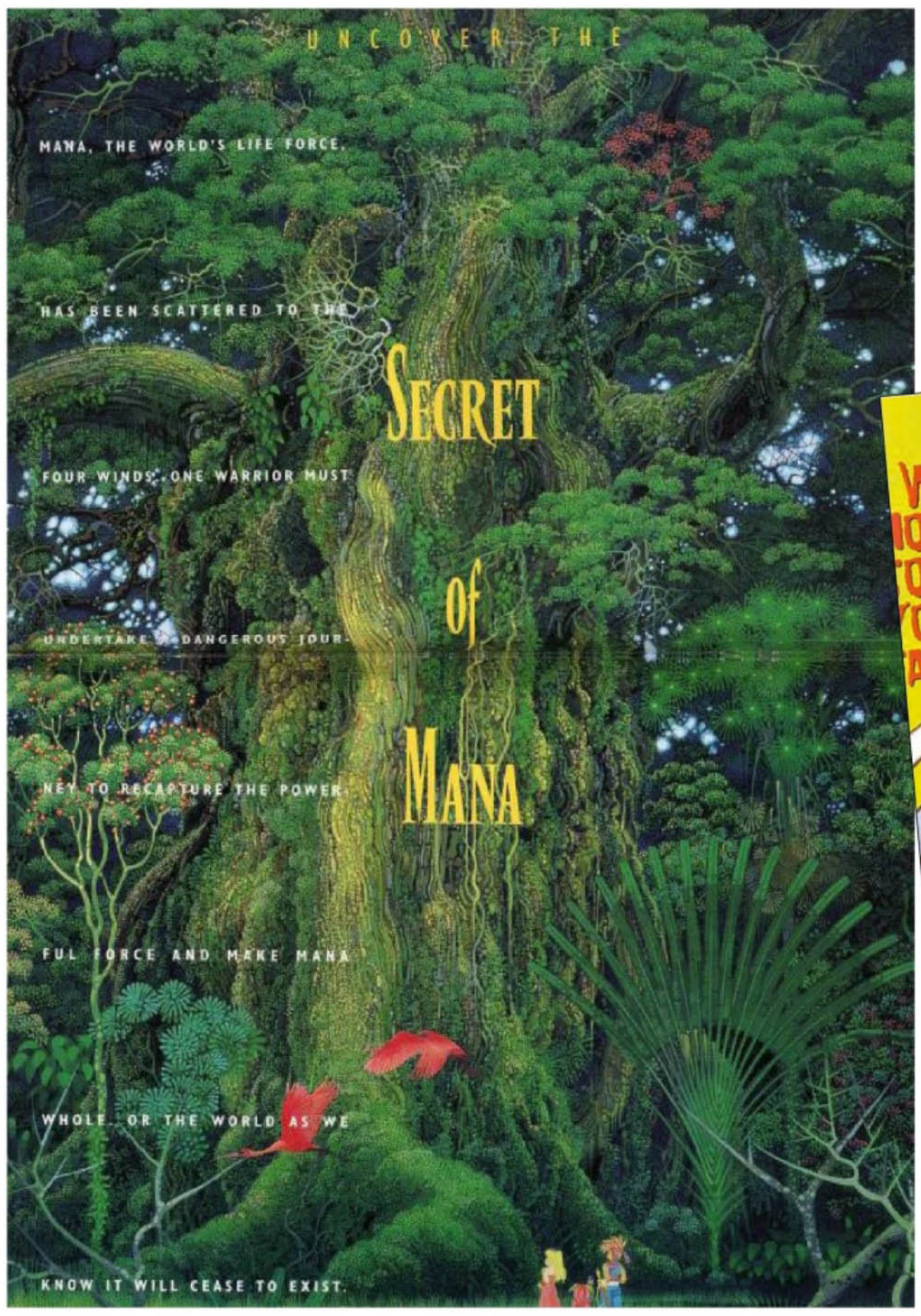
» *Super Castlevania* was yet another fantastic release from Konami e of the last games to be released for the Super Famicom in 1999.

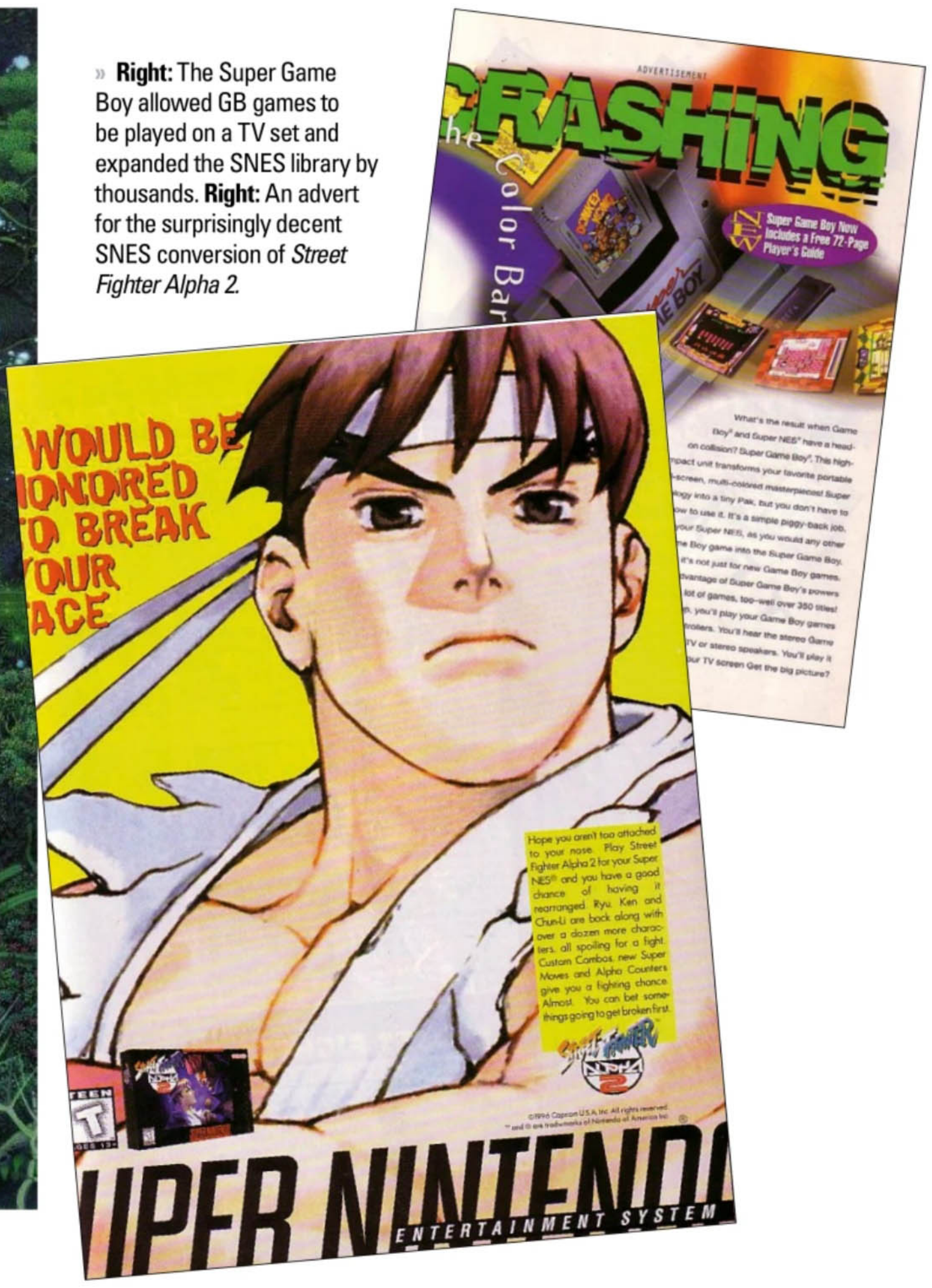


» *Donkey Kong Country* used Rare's "Advanced Computer Modelling" to create previously inconceivable visuals on the ageing SNES.


UNCOVER THE
MANA, THE WORLD'S LIFE FORCE,
HAS BEEN SCATTERED TO THE
FOUR WINDS. ONE WARRIOR MUST
UNDERTAKE A DANGEROUS JOURNEY
TO RECAPTURE THE POWER-
FUL FORCE AND MAKE MANA
WHOLE, OR THE WORLD AS WE
KNOW IT WILL CEASE TO EXIST.
SECRET of MANA

» An enigmatic 2-page advert for *Secret Of Mana* that bravely chose not to use screenshots.

» **Right:** The Super Game Boy allowed GB games to be played on a TV set and expanded the SNES library by thousands. **Right:** An advert for the surprisingly decent SNES conversion of *Street Fighter Alpha 2*.


ADVERTISEMENT
CRASHING
The Color Bar
NEW
Super Game Boy Now Includes a Free 72-Page Player's Guide
WOULD BE HONORED TO BREAK YOUR FACE
Street Fighter Alpha 2
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

What's the result when Game Boy® and Super NES® have a head-on collision? Super Game Boy®. This high-

Hope you aren't too attached to your nose. Play Street Fighter Alpha 2 for your Super NES® and you have a good chance of having it rearranged. Ryu, Ken and Chun-Li are back along with over a dozen more characters, all spoiling for a fight. Custom Combos, new Super Moves and Alpha Counters give you a fighting chance. Almost. You can bet something's going to get broken first.

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» **Top Left and right:** By tying the release of *Super Mario World* to the SNES Nintendo ensure great success for their new console. The "Mode 7" effects in *F-Zero* really showed off the power of the Super Nintendo. **Bottom left and right:** *Star Fox* (renamed *Star Wing* in the UK) used extra hardware to push the SNES beyond its limitations. By arriving so late in the console's life, *Yoshi's Island* went tragically unnoticed

was starting to form: although Sega's success was assured by its in-house conversions and its relationship with EA, it was Nintendo's SNES that turned the most heads by continually providing the classiest most desirable games. It started with *Mario* and *Street Fighter* and continued through *Zelda*, *Secret Of Mana*, *Axelay*, *Super Mario Kart* and hundreds of other top-drawer games that would go on to steal the hearts of hardcore and casual gamers alike.

As the years went by and more powerful competitors (like the 3DO and Jaguar) fell by the wayside the SNES' excellent range of software continued to impress with the aid of Nintendo's quality control and, when it became apparent that the console was beginning to show its age, Nintendo built partnerships with third-party developers to find new ways of making their games look next generation even if the original hardware wasn't. The first of these partnerships came about when the UK's Argonaut Software impressed Nintendo by programming the monochrome Game Boy to display full 3D graphics. On the strength of the Game Boy title, two of Argonaut's employees, Giles Goddard and Dylan Cuthbert, achieved what few British coders have and secured positions at Nintendo's Kyoto headquarters. There they developed the "Mario Chip" (later renamed Super FX) a cartridge embedded co-processor that would allow the SNES to display true 3D polygonal visuals for the first time. The first Super FX game they created, with the legendary design talents of Shigeru Miyamoto, was *Star Fox*: an astounding 3D space combat game that wowed SNES owners of 1993, who couldn't believe the console was capable of such graphics. The following year another incredibly talented UK software house found a way to push the SNES beyond its preconceived limits. Rare, who had previously pushed the ZX Spectrum much further than anyone thought possible, had been using Silicon Graphics workstations to test concepts for Nintendo's next console: the Ultra 64. In doing so they discovered a way of using high quality pre-rendered graphics on the humble SNES, which they used to create the beautiful *Donkey Kong Country* and an arcade conversion of the previously Ultra 64 bound *Killer Instinct*. With the PlayStation and the Saturn on the horizon the startling looks of Rare and Argonaut's games must have made the SNES a very tempting reason to not upgrade.

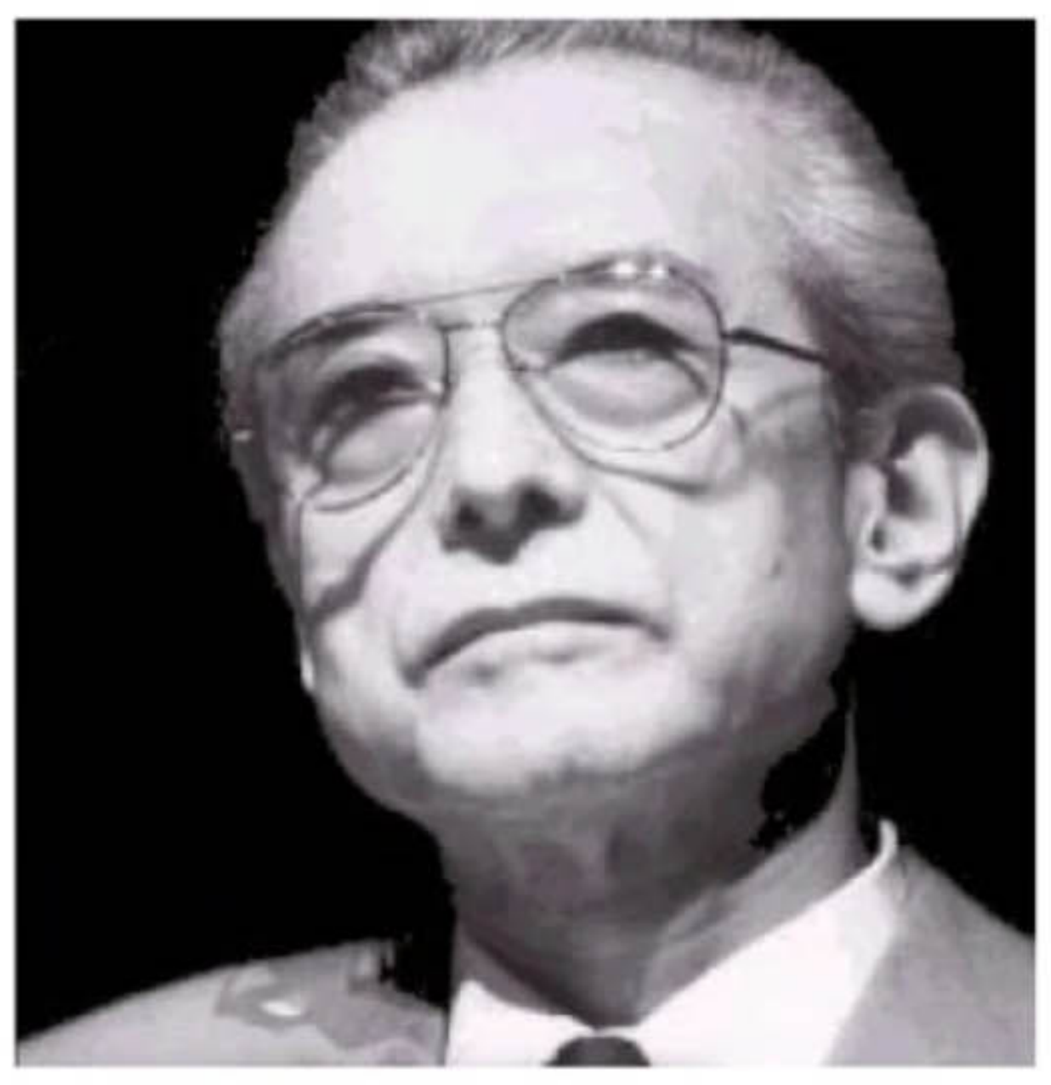
Nintendo's luck couldn't last forever though and, despite pushing the hardware to its limits, sales of the SNES slowed to a trickle in the UK – due in no small part to the globe-consuming success of the PlayStation. Nevertheless, like all good consoles, the SNES was due a last hurrah and got it in the form of *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island*. The gorgeous platform game used a combination of Mode 7 and the Super FX2 chip to pump out some of the best effects the SNES had ever seen and with the classic Nintendo gameplay it became one of the console's most loved titles. The gloriously beautiful platform game proved that the Super Nintendo was far from dead but was sadly lost in the excitement of the new era of 3D games and the hype surrounding *Super Mario 64*. Though it attained outstanding critical acclaim, *Yoshi's Island* was a commercial flop in the UK and was one of the last significant SNES titles to see a European release alongside *Donkey Kong Country 3* and *Street Fighter Alpha 2* in December 1996.

As is typical of Japanese consoles, the native Super Famicom lived on much longer than the Western SNES thanks to continued hardware support and a greater demand for software. The Satellaview (see boxout) broadcasted new Super Famicom games directly into players' homes from 1995 to 2000 and, in doing so, kept the large user base active. A new hardware model was introduced in 1998: the Super Famicom Jr was a smaller, sleeker unit that was affordably priced as an alternative to the N64 and allegedly small enough to be sold in street vending machines. Top quality games continued to be released until 2000 with *Fire Emblem: Thracia 776* and a series of *Picross* titles being the most noteworthy.

Production of the Super Famicom finally ceased in late 2003, which may seem like a good innings until you consider that production of the original Famicom was discontinued in the same year. Regardless, throughout its thirteen-year lifespan, the SNES/Super Famicom achieved widespread success and adoration thanks to Nintendo's willingness to keep the machine alive through groundbreaking hardware expansions and a virtually limitless string of superb releases.

A Room with a Satellaview

The Satellaview has such an unusual history that we could fill a RetroInspection on this intriguing add-on alone. The device allowed the Super Famicom to acquire games from St Giga: a popular Japanese satellite service. At prescheduled times the service would broadcast a chosen game which could then be downloaded onto a flash cart and played "offline". The service was discontinued in 2000 but it is still possible to find flash carts with games saved to them. These extreme rarities should be of particular interest to Nintendo fans as the service featured exclusive versions of classic Nintendo games including *Zelda*, *Famicom Wars*, *Fire Emblem* and *Excitebike*. There was even a text based sequel to *Chrono Trigger* (known as *Radical Dreamers*) and some games, like the satellite version of *A Link To The Past*, could only be played at certain times of day because the Satellaview broadcast live voice-acting into the game.

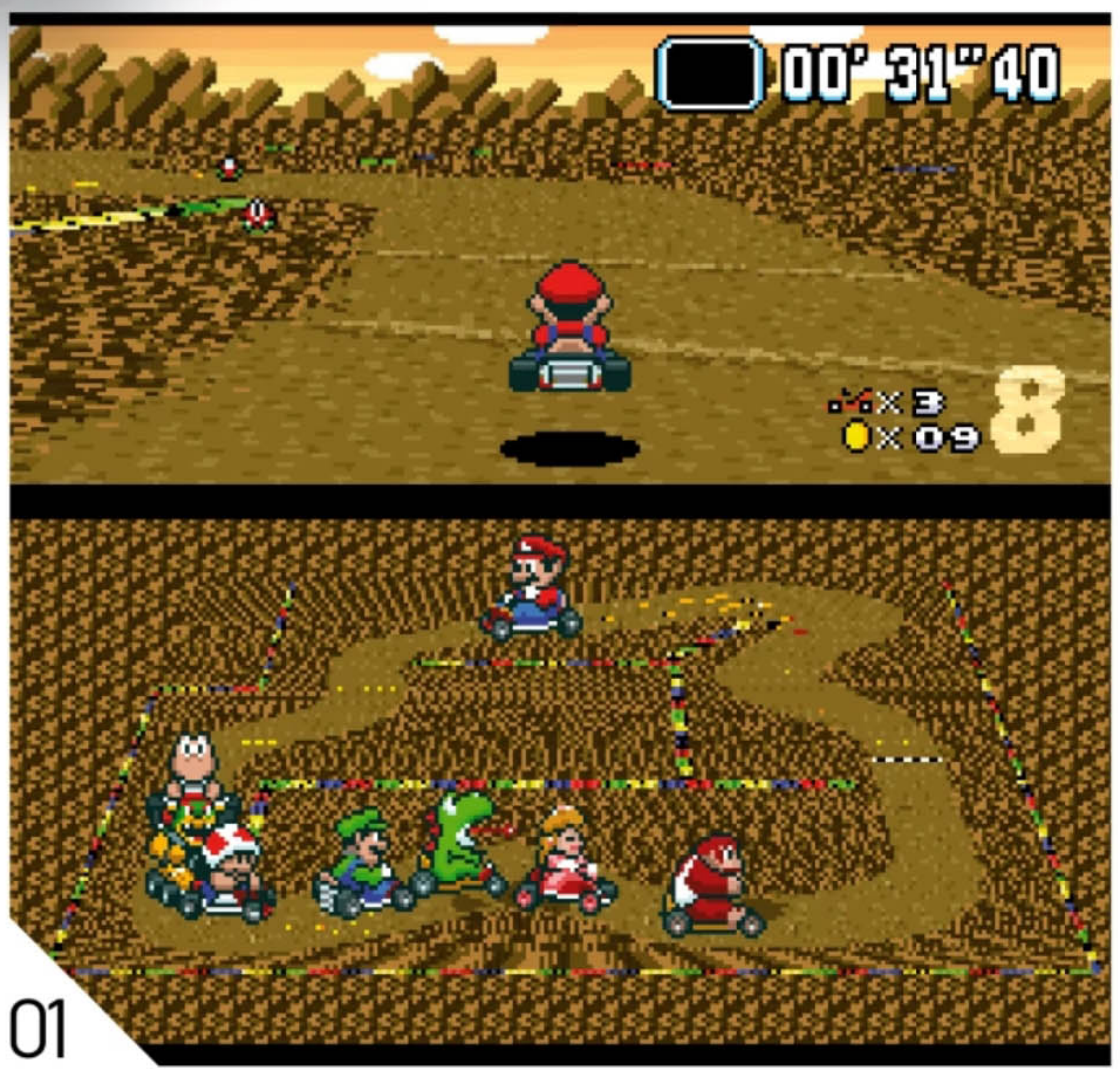


» Hiroshi Yamauchi was the head of Nintendo for 53 years and was instrumental to its early success.

SNES

PERFECT TEN GAMES

There is a fantastic, diverse range of great games available on the Super Nintendo, which makes putting any selection of games together a near thankless task. We'll happily do it though, as we love Nintendo's 16-bit console. So without further ado, here's our essential choices that deserve to be in every Super Nintendo owner's collection. If you don't own them, you clearly don't love Nintendo's console as much as we do



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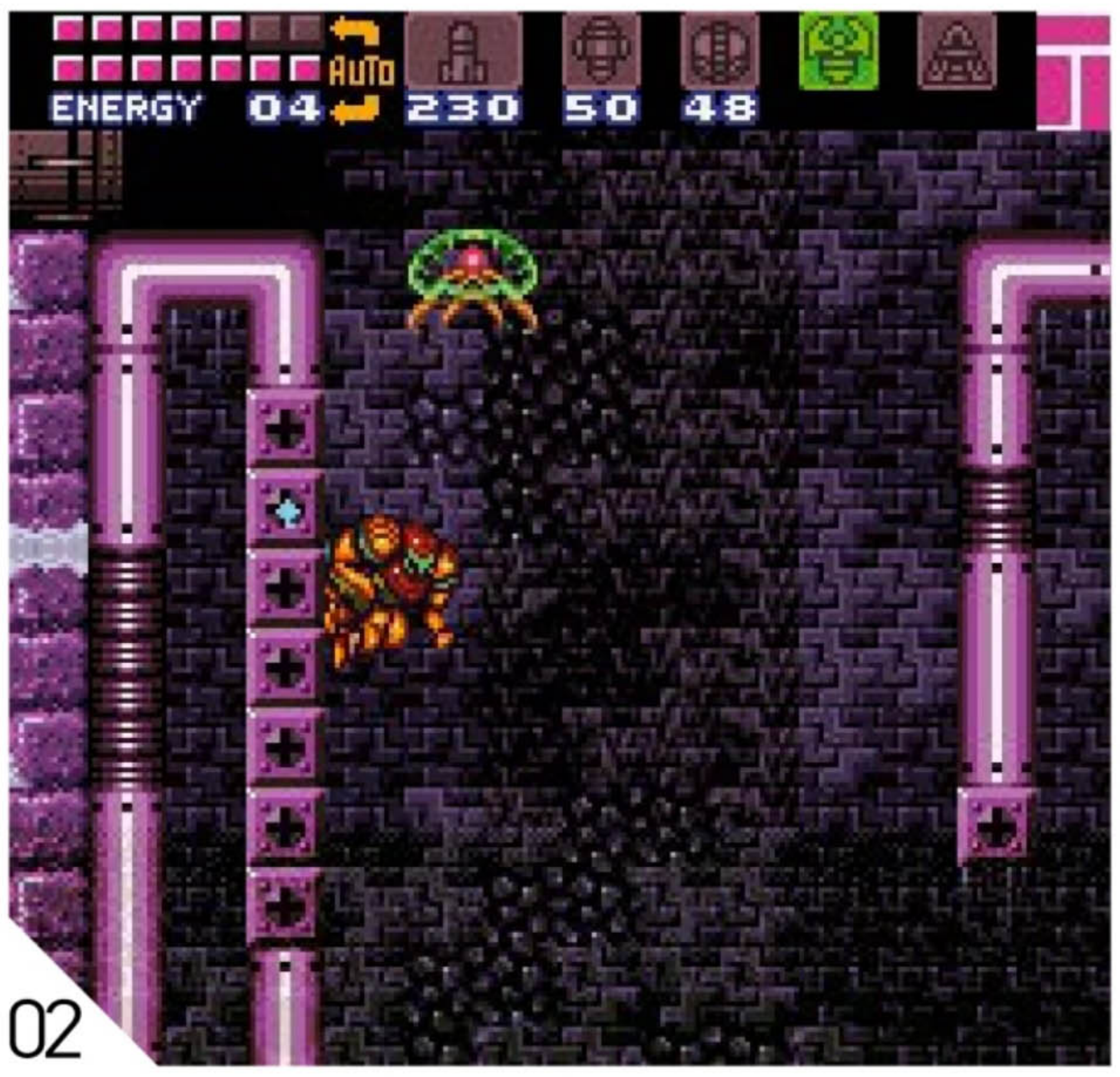

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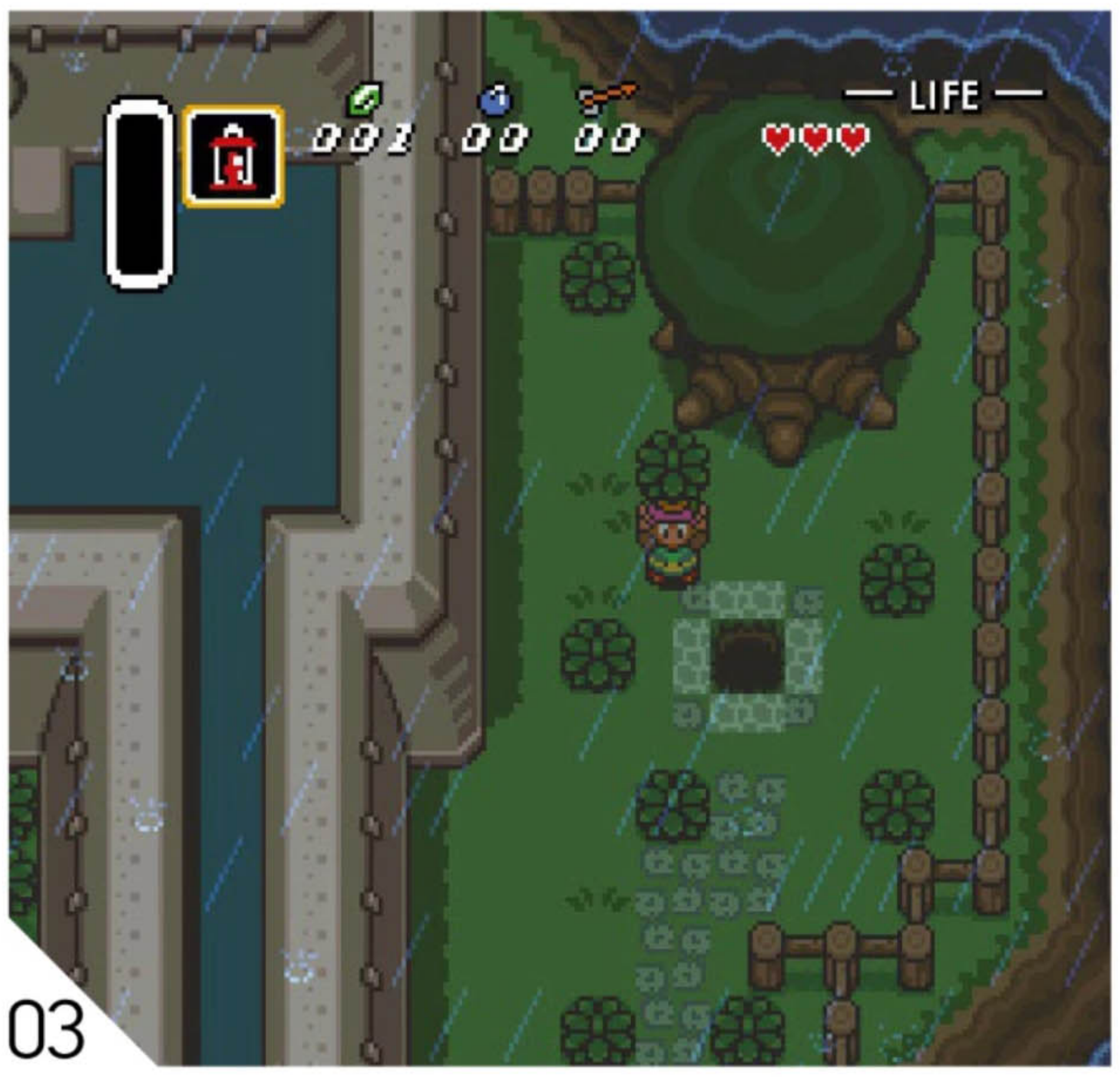

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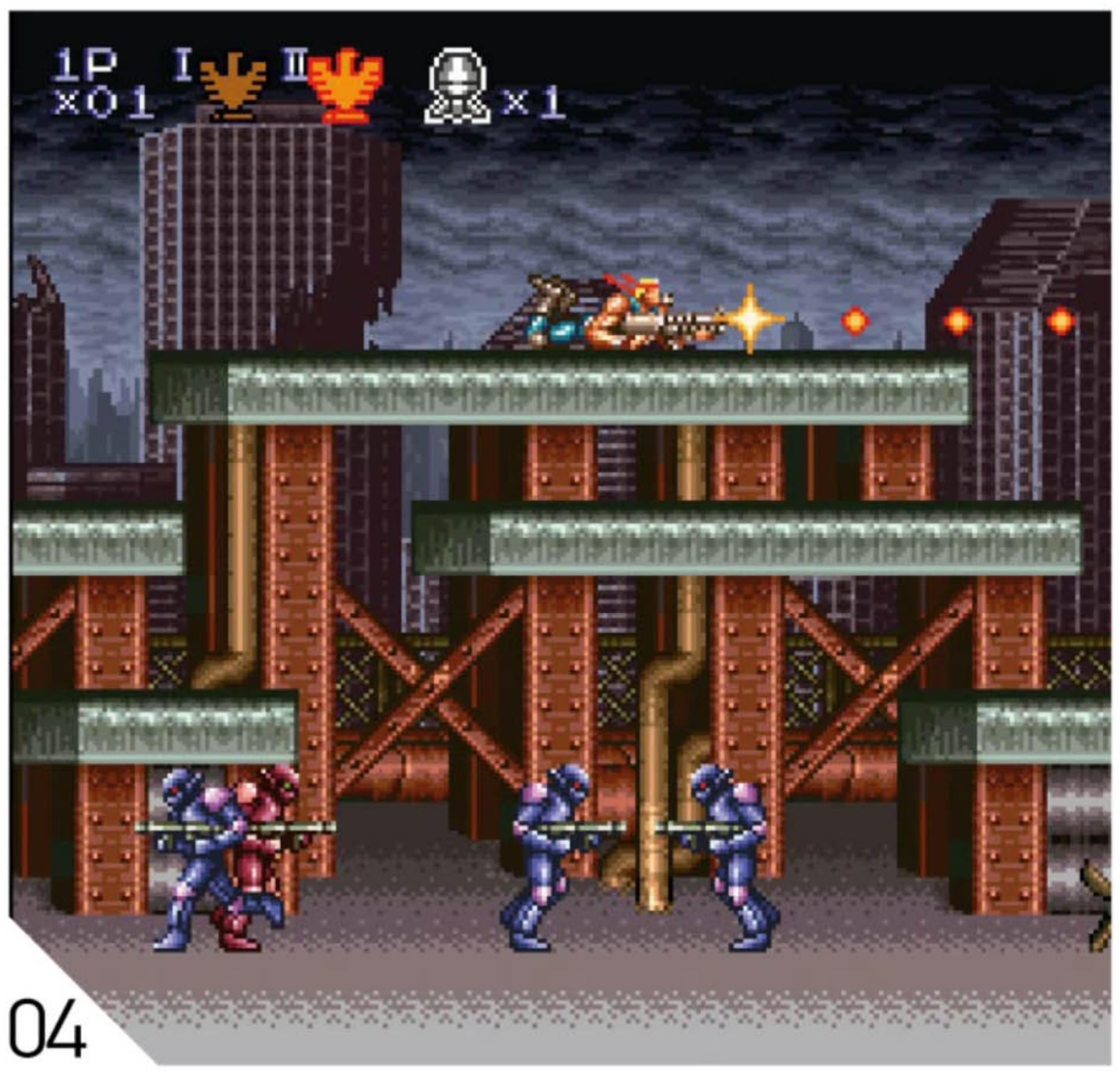


04

SUPER MARIO KART

- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER MARIO BROS

01 We've been playing the original *Super Mario Kart* on and off now for a staggering 20 years and it still remains fresher than a baker's dozen that's just popped out the oven. Meticulously designed circuits, a well-balanced range of weapons – including the greatly missed feather – and impressive visuals proved perfectly that there was so much more to everyone's favourite plumber than simply jumping on wayward Koopas. While the cups provided plenty of fun, it was the stunning time trial mode and sublime multi-player games that kept us constantly going back for just one more go. Thank goodness we weren't around at the time of *Mario Kart*'s release; we'd have never got the damned magazine finished on time!

SUPER METROID

- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- **CREATED BY:** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BADVANCE WARS DS

02 *Super Metroid* is a game that works on a variety of levels. While some marvelled at its motherly themes, stunningly created environments and remarkable attention to detail, others were simply impressed with the sheer amount of crap you could blow up in it. Regardless of how you feel about Samus's only 16-bit adventure, there's no denying that *Super Metroid* remains a staggering achievement that perfectly combines the rush of shooting huge bosses with the wonder of exploring vast new areas like no other SNES game around. Little wonder then that it took Nintendo eight years to come up with a sequel that could do it justice.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME

03 There's no denying the superiority of *Ocarina Of Time*, but *A Link To The Past* remains a wonderfully accomplished adventure that deserves to sit proudly in every SNES owner's collection. Every dungeon you explore is crafted to perfection, and while they start off easy, you'll soon be scratching your head over Miyamoto's deviously designed puzzles. The many weapons you discover are well balanced and every encountered boss is a masterstroke in design. Then of course you have the two unique worlds that Link can eventually switch between, thus making an already sprawling game even larger. Quite simply one of the finest 16-bit adventures ever made.

CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WARS

- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **PUBLISHED BY:** KONAMI
- **CREATED BY:** KONAMI
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV

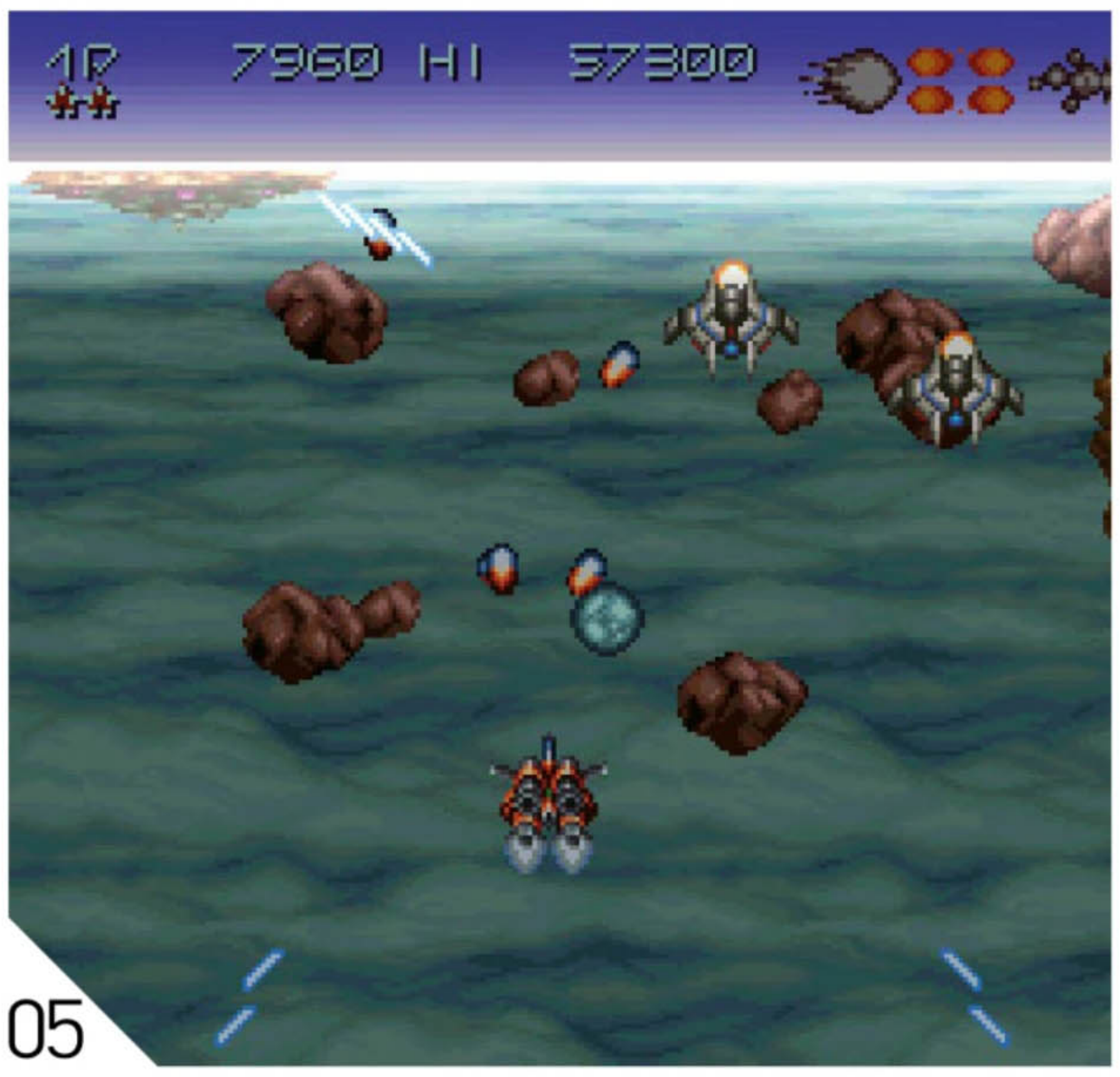
04 Konami released some outstanding titles for Nintendo's 16-bit wonder, but this cracking effort from 1992 is arguably one of its best efforts.

Each level is a rollercoaster ride of destruction and featured the SNES hardware on fine form. Sprites are full of detail, the game's many bosses a joy to behold, and there's a ridiculous amount of Mode 7 trickery going on. Add in a fantastic, stomping soundtrack, an awesome array of different weapons and some groovy overhead levels (that can be rotated with the left and right triggers) and you have a run-and-gun title that would be essential on any format.

AXELAY

- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **PUBLISHED BY:** KONAMI
- **CREATED BY:** KONAMI
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** GRADIUS III

05 There's a host of great shooters available for the SNES, but few can compare to the brilliance that is Konami's stunning *Axelay*. From its quasi-3D levels to its utterly amazing music, every moment of *Axelay* is exhilarating to play through. While the level design and available weapons are worthy of praise, it's the immense, striking bosses the game constantly throws at you that truly astound. Huge metallic spiders, colossal ED-209 styled mechs and a gigantic lava creature are just a few of the mayors you have to deal with and each is breath-taking to behold. Why's it's never been released on the GBA we'll never know…



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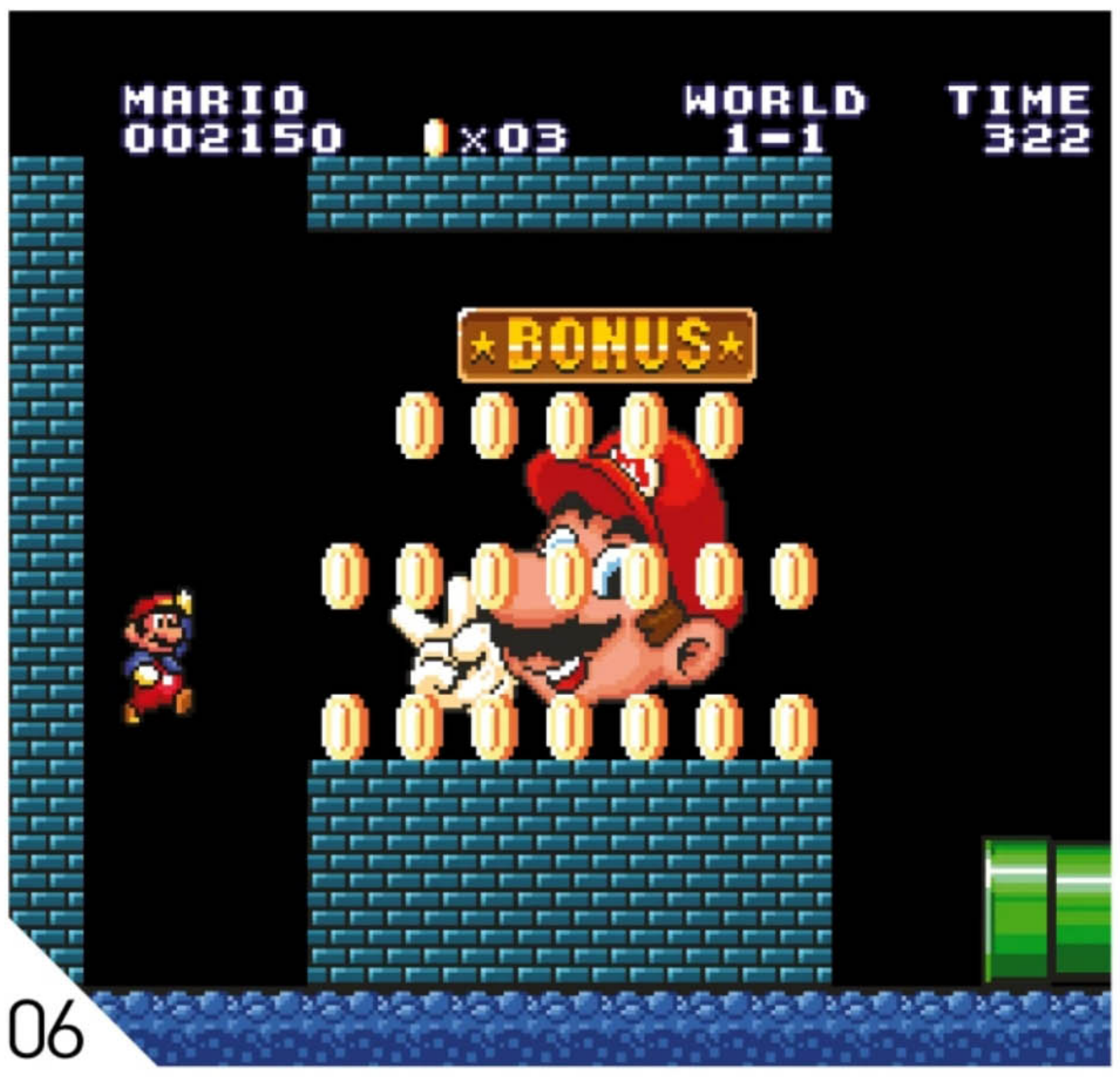

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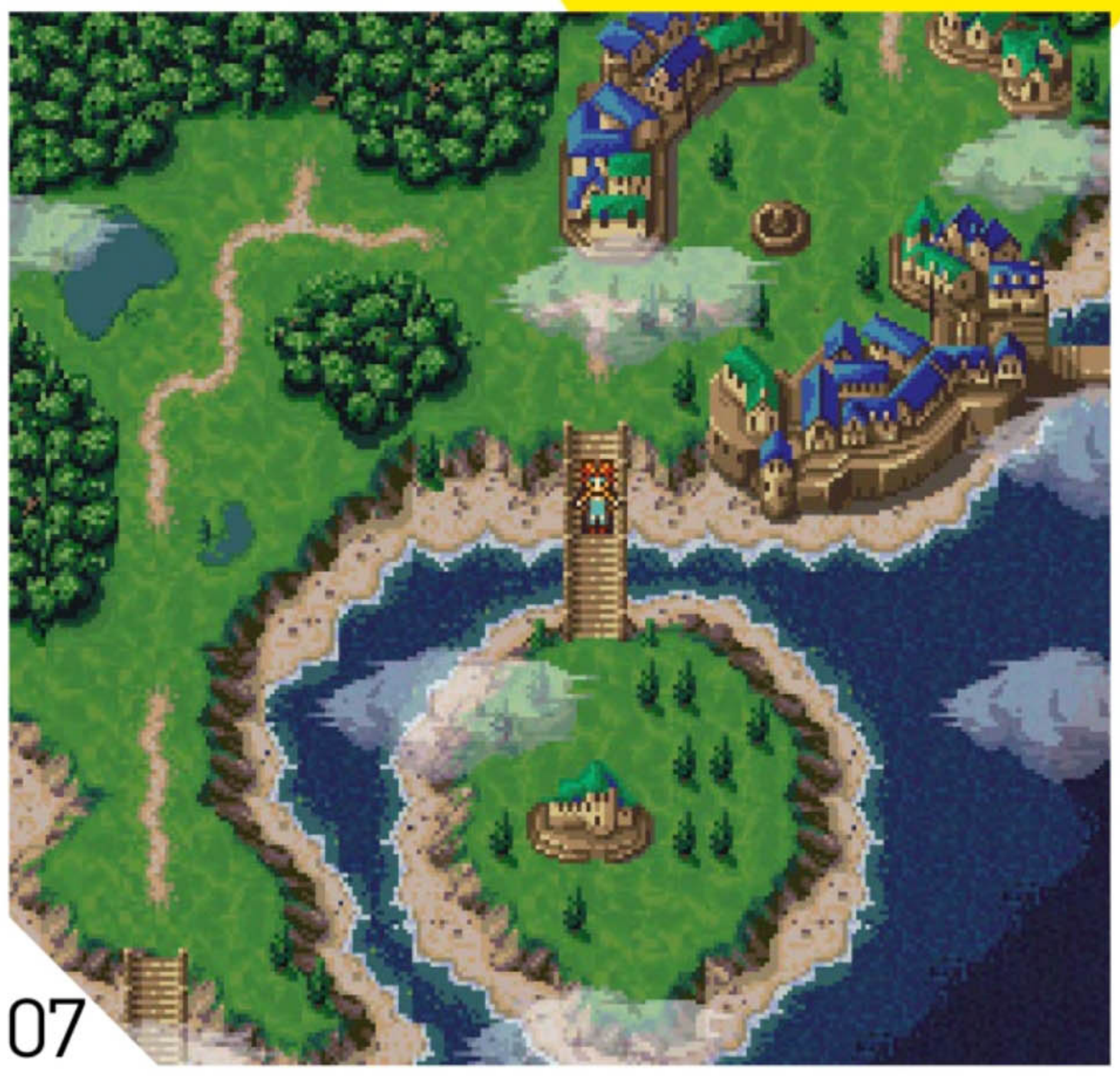

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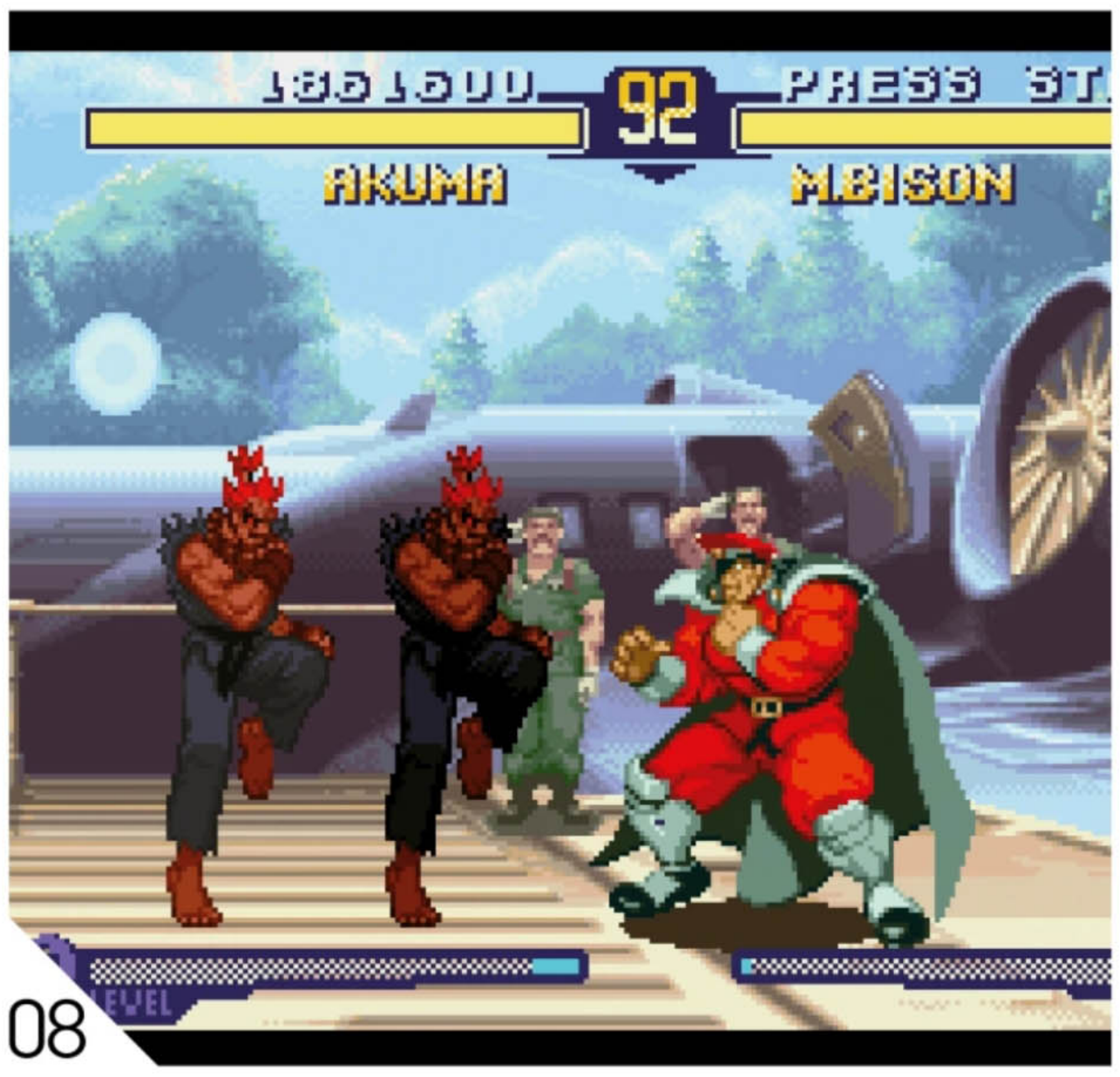

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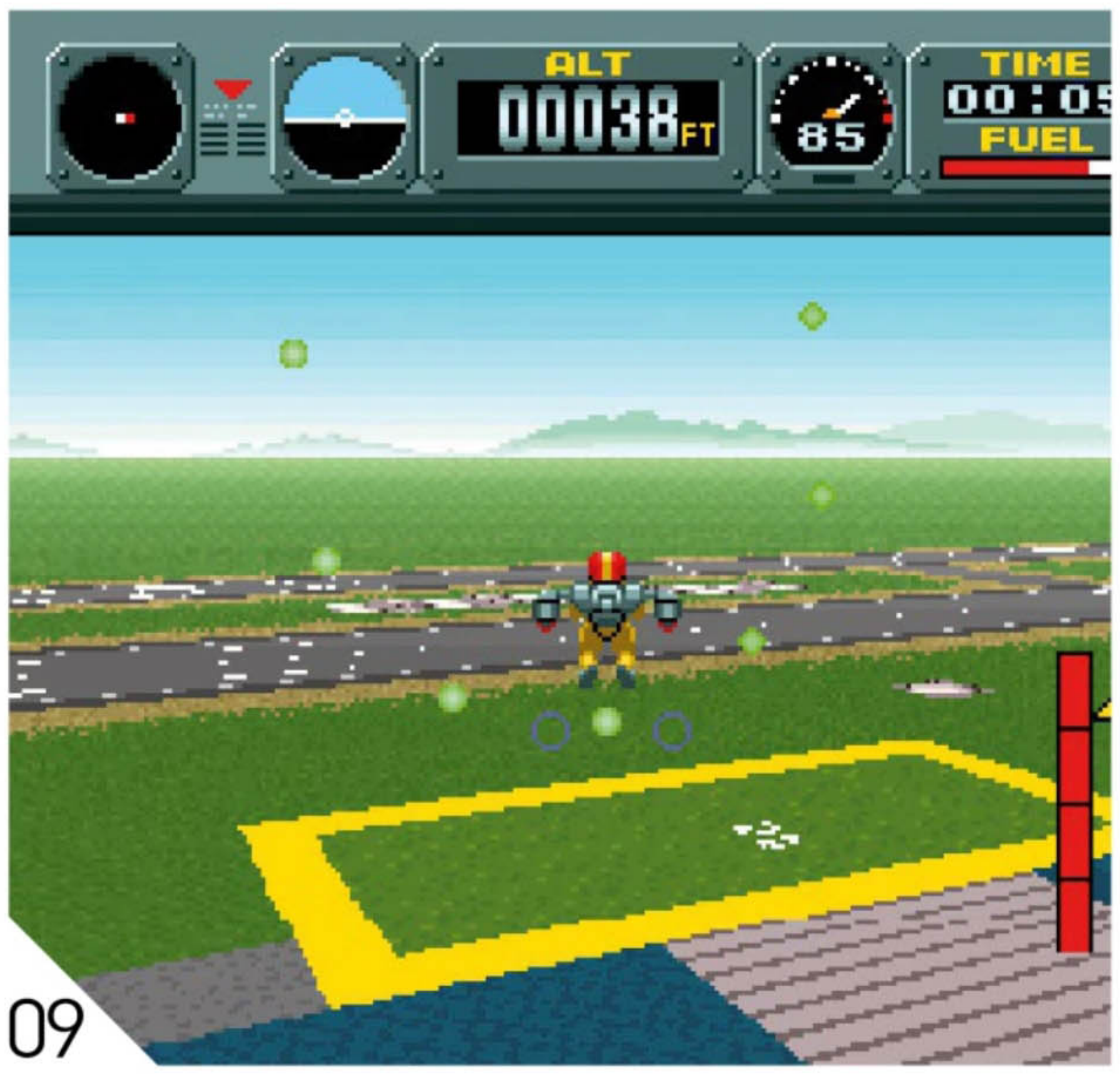

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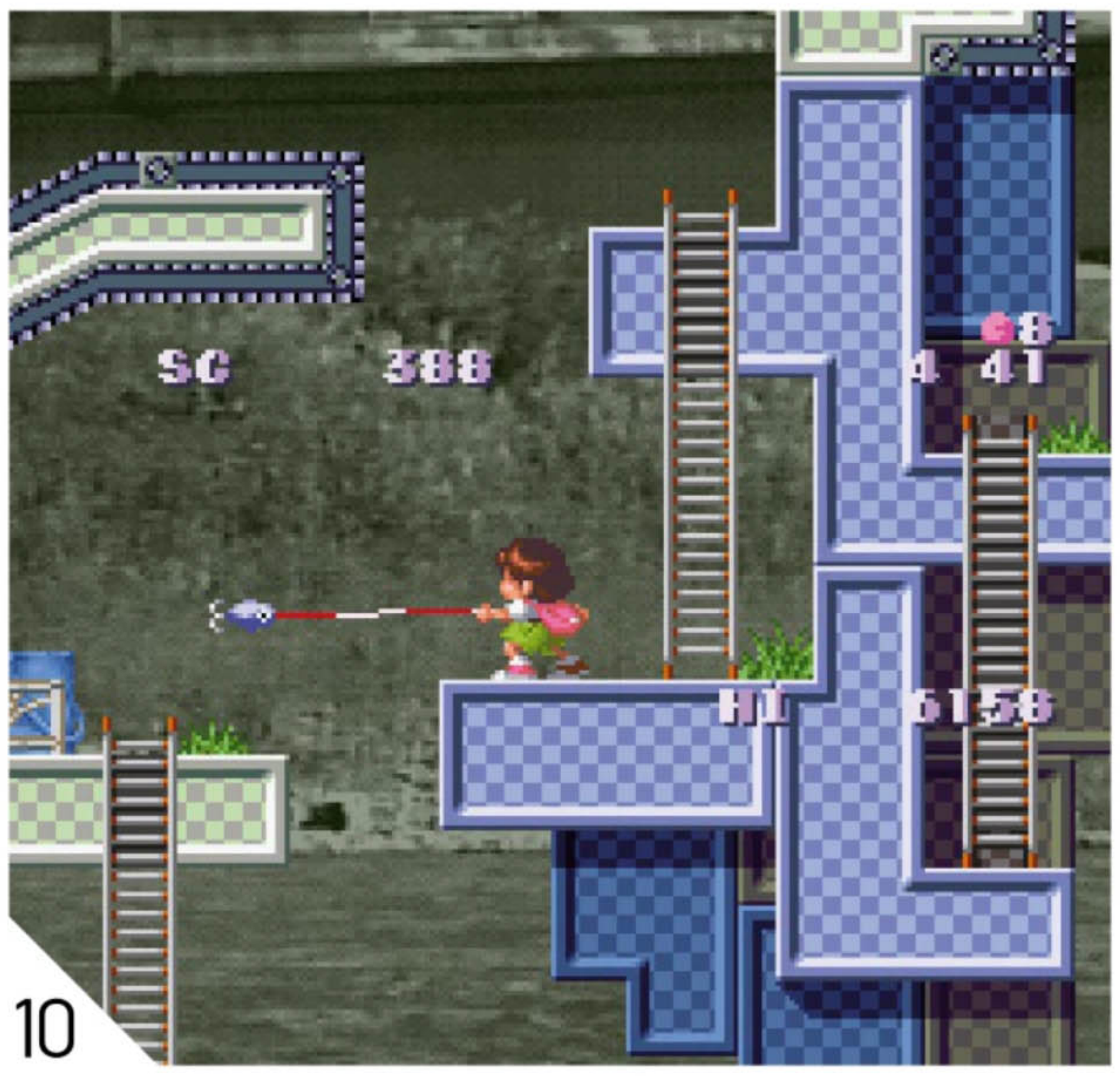

10

SUPER MARIO ALL-STARS

- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

06 What's better than three classic *Mario* NES outings on one cartridge? Why, three *Mario* NES games with improved aesthetics and a fourth exclusive title that had only originally appeared in Japan of course!

All-Stars' triple whammy of *Super Mario Bros 1, 2* and *3* made it incredible value for money and were great examples of taking old games and updating them for a newer platform. Add in *Super Mario Bros: The Lost Levels*, which was effectively a tougher version of the original game and allowed you to choose from either brother and you had an amazingly comprehensive package. Finally, if you bought the version that came boxed with a SNES you received *Super Mario World* on the cartridge. Bargain!

CHRONO TRIGGER

- **RELEASED:** 1995
- **PUBLISHED BY:** SQUARESOFT
- **CREATED BY:** SQUARESOFT
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** FINAL FANTASY X

07 It would have been all too easy to go with Squaresoft's *Secret Of Mana*, so we've decided to focus on this little beauty instead.

While Squaresoft's epic RPG borrows plenty of ideas from the *Final Fantasy* series, you just can't help but be impressed by the sheer amount of love that has gone into crafting this astonishing RPG. Although the central storyline is fairly predictable, it soon begins to twist and turn all over the place and introduces plenty of memorable characters and sub plots. The combat system is a joy to use and the use of sound throughout is outstanding. It all combines to create one of the most engrossing RPGs we've ever played. Utterly essential.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA II

- **RELEASED:** 1996
- **PUBLISHED BY:** CAPCOM
- **CREATED BY:** CAPCOM
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

08 Capcom's second *Alpha* title was released late in the SNES's life, and as a result, was sadly overlooked by a great many gamers who had moved on to the newer, flashier consoles.

Their loss was our gain however, as it's easily one the best brawlers on Nintendo's 16-bit wonder. Great looking sprites, a solid roster of characters, new moves, plenty of additional animation and thumping good gameplay made *Alpha II* a winner. We've no idea why the first game didn't appear on the SNES, but Capcom more than made up for it with this excellent sequel. An outstanding fighter that deserves to be in everyone's SNES collection.

PILOTWINGS

- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NINTENDO
- **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DONKEY KONG

09 The Mode 7 chip was used in countless numbers of SNES games, but never was its appearance more noticeable than in the wondrous *Pilotwings*.

Taking control of a budding pilot, all the game required you to do was master licences for four different events: Skydiving, Rocketbelt, Light Plane and Hang Glider. While some of *Pilotwings'* events could be tricky to get to grips with, the elation you felt when they were finally mastered more than made up for it. Thanks to the excellent Mode 7 effects the sense of scale you encountered as you flew through the air was breath-taking, and wait until you finally get to use the hang glider… Marvellous.

UMIHARA KAWASE

- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **PUBLISHED BY:** NHK
- **CREATED BY:** TNN
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SHIJOU SAIKYOU LEAGUE SERIE A: ACE STRIKER

10 It seems only fair to put at least one quirky Japanese title in the top ten, so our vote goes to the delightful *Umihara Kawase*.

Taking control of an adorably cute little girl, the aim of each stage is simple – avoid the bizarre fishy enemies and reach the door on each exit. Of course, said exit is often out of reach, and with your little tyke not being that great a jumper she has to rely on a handy elastic rope to get her around. Think *Bionic Commando* but with some decent rope physics thrown into the mix and you have a good idea of what to expect.

SNES

and the rest...

Nintendo's 16-bit console was an absolute powerhouse of a machine and supported an amazing array of different genres. From hit arcade conversions to the incredibly obscure, the SNES had something for everyone

01 ACTRAISER
02 SUPER GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS
03 THE FIREMEN
04 KILLER INSTINCT
05 DONALD DUCK
06 SUPER BOMBERMAN
07 THE ADVENTURES OF BATMAN & ROBIN
08 MAGIC SWORD
09 CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WAR
10 GANBARE GOEMON 2
11 SHADOWRUN
12 TERRANIGMA
13 MEGA MAN X
14 CANNON FODDER
15 SUPER METROID
16 POCKY & ROCKY
17 DONKEY KONG COUNTRY
18 JOE & MAC
19 PILOTWINGS
20 TETRIS BATTLE GAIDEN
21 SUPER MARIO ALL-STARS
22 ALADDIN
23 BREATH OF FIRE
24 GOKUJOU PARODIUS
25 STUNT RACE FX
26 EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
27 SIM CITY
28 STARWING
29 FIRST SAMURAI
30 ARKANOID: DOH IT AGAIN
31 BLACK THORNE
32 PRINCE OF PERSIA
33 CACOMA KNIGHT
34 SUPER STREET FIGHTER 2: TURBO 'HYPER FIGHTING
35 THE ADDAMS FAMILY
36 FINAL FIGHT GUY
37 MICKY MANIA
38 SUPER MARIO WORLD
39 CYBERNATOR
40 LEMMINGS
41 ACTRAISER
42 BATTLETOADS & DOUBLE DRAGON: THE ULTIMATE TEAM
43 THE CHAOS ENGINE
44 MR DO!
45 SECRET OF MANA
46 SUPER SMASH TV
47 DARIUS TWIN
48 SUPER TENNIS
49 UNIRALLY
50 ASTERIX & OBELIX
51 SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV
52 BURAI
53 PLOK!
54 R-TYPE III: THE THIRD LIGHTNING
55 THUNDER SPIRITS
56 UMIHARA KAWASE
57 EARTHBOUND
58 INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER
59 RENDERING RANGER
60 SUPER MARIO RPG: LEGEND OF THE SEVEN STARS
61 U.N. SQUADRON
62 THE LORD OF THE RINGS
63 TOP GEAR
64 AXELAY
65 DEMON'S CREST
66 NINJA GAIDEN TRILOGY
67 SUPER PUNCH-OUT!!
68 F-ZERO
69 SUPER STAR WARS
70 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES IV: TURTLES IN TIME
71 ART OF FIGHTING 2
72 CAPTAIN COMMANDO
73 SUPER MARIO KART
74 GRADIUS III
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76 SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: YOSHI'S ISLAND
77 THE SIMPSONS: BART'S NIGHTMARE
78 BIO METAL
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84 THE KING OF DRAGONS
85 MICRO MACHINES
86 DAZE BEFORE CHRISTMAS
87 WILD GUNS

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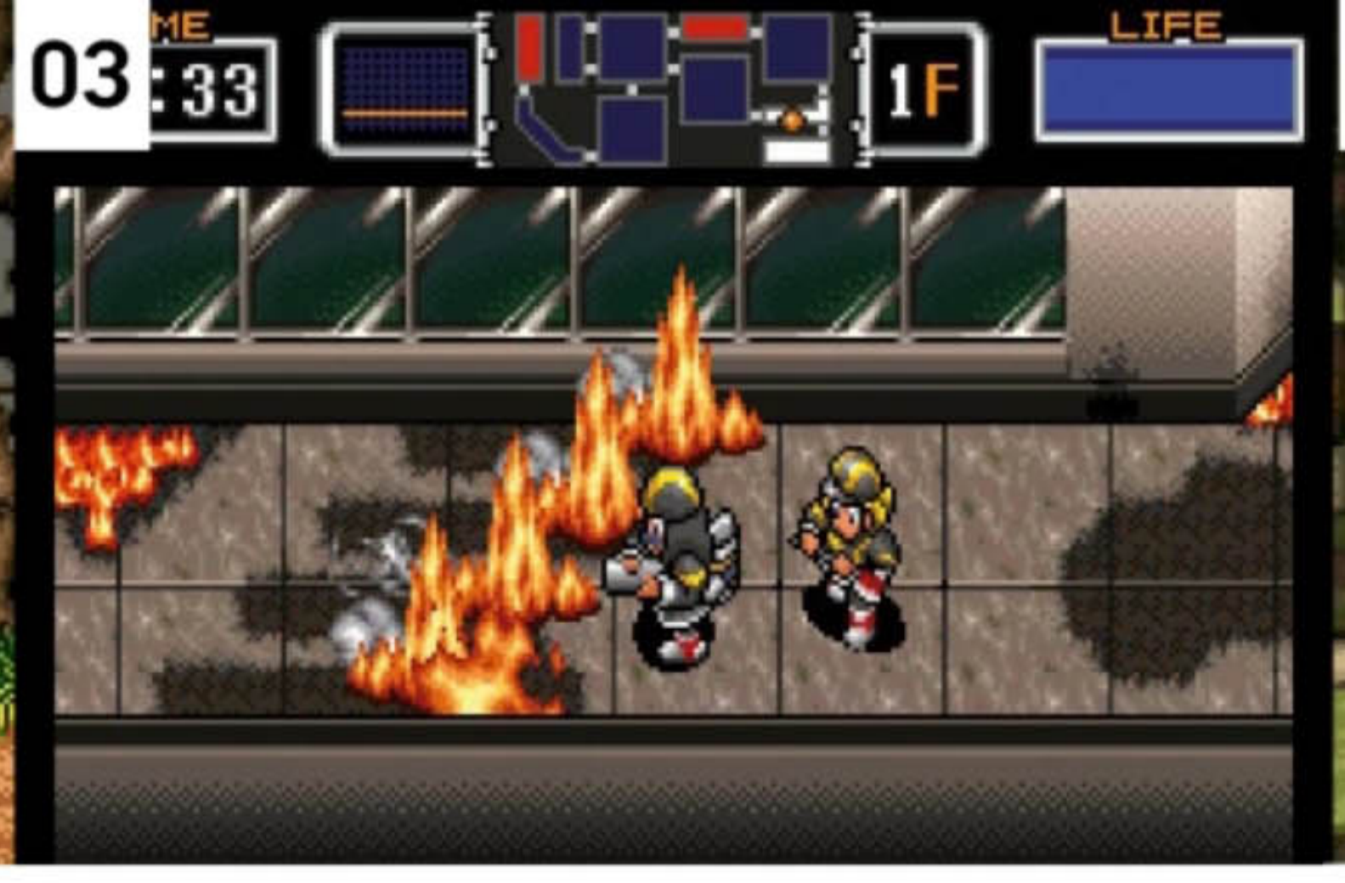

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SHIELD
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RYU
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GUY
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SIMONS

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EXTRA
Mr.Do!
EXTRA
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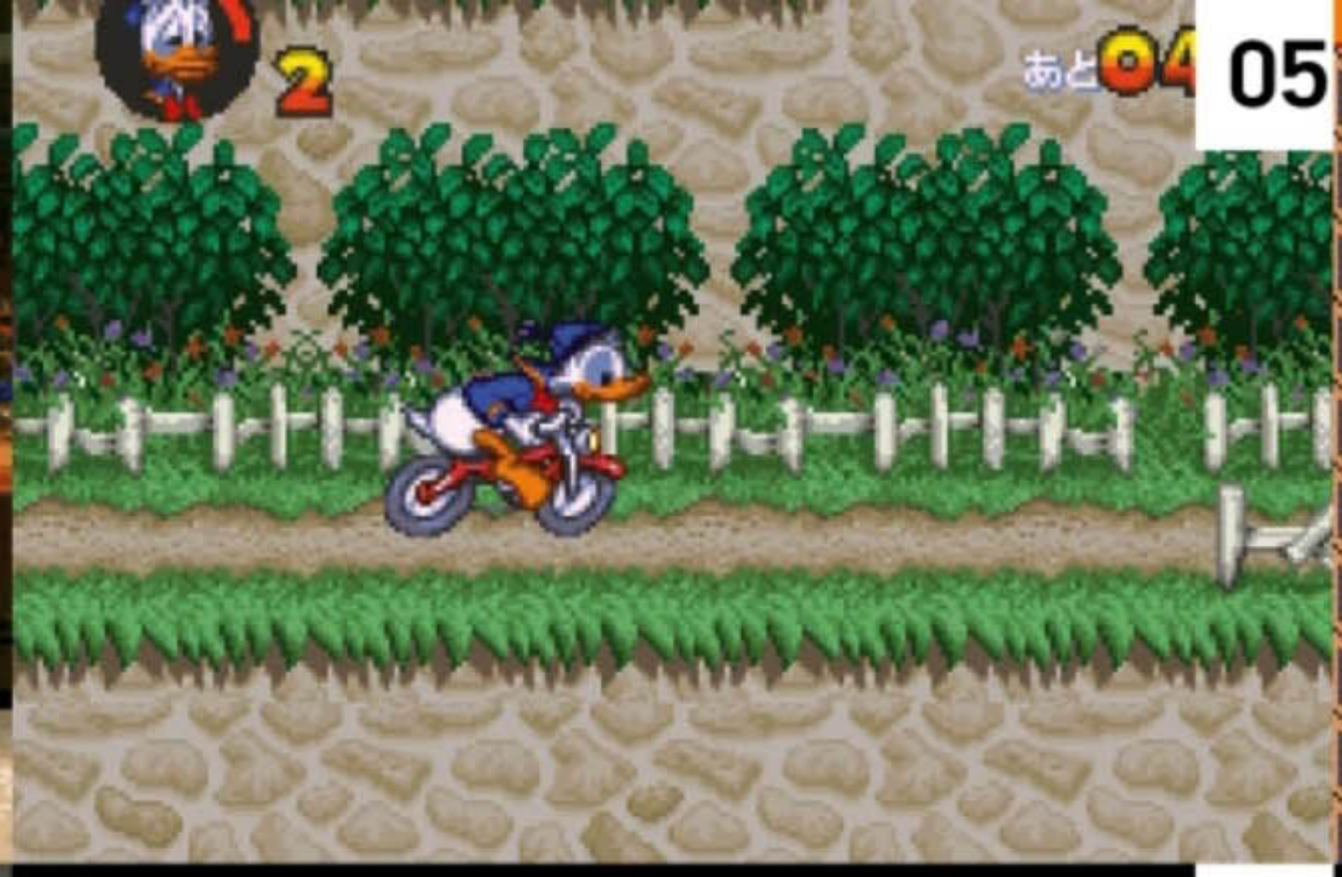

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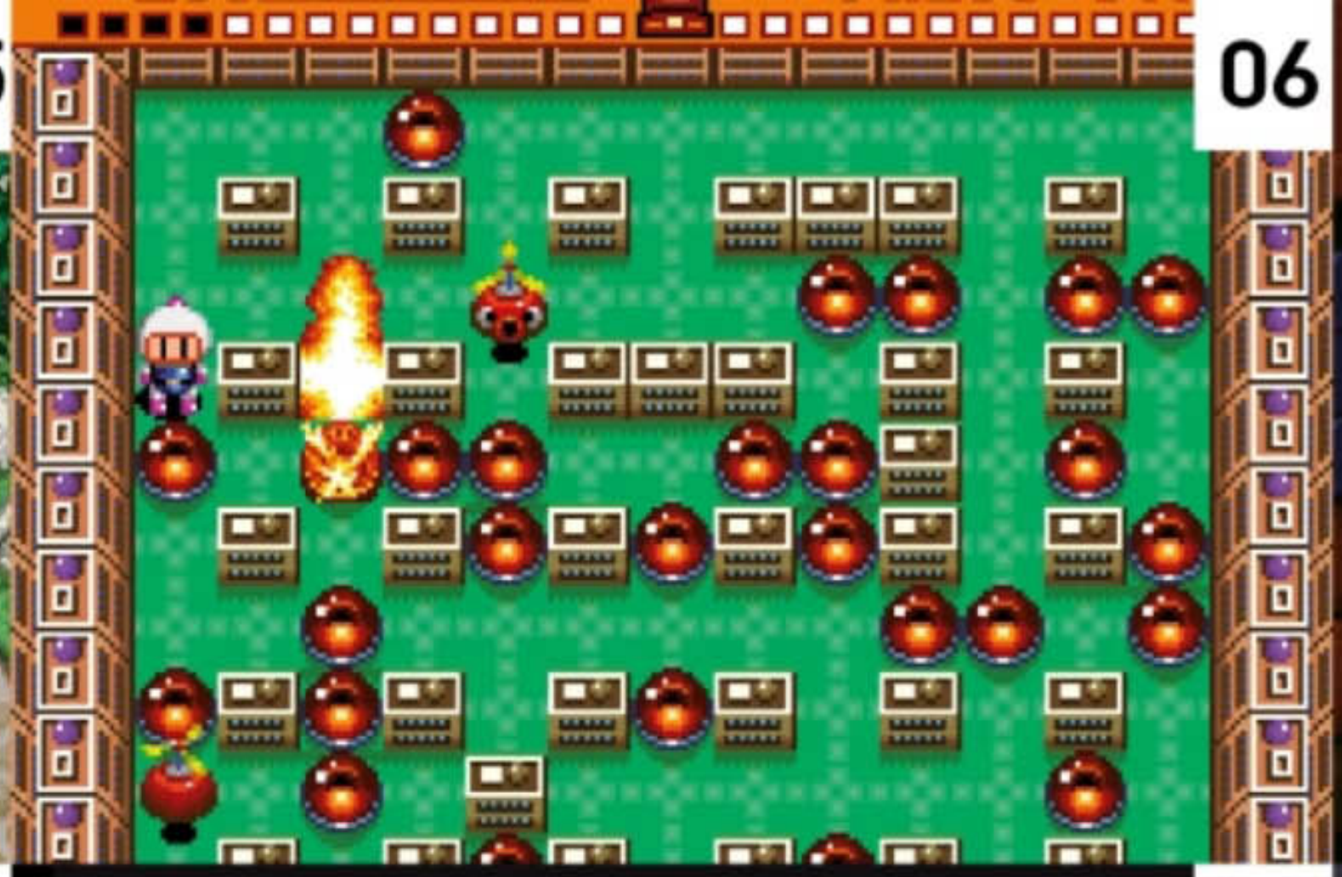

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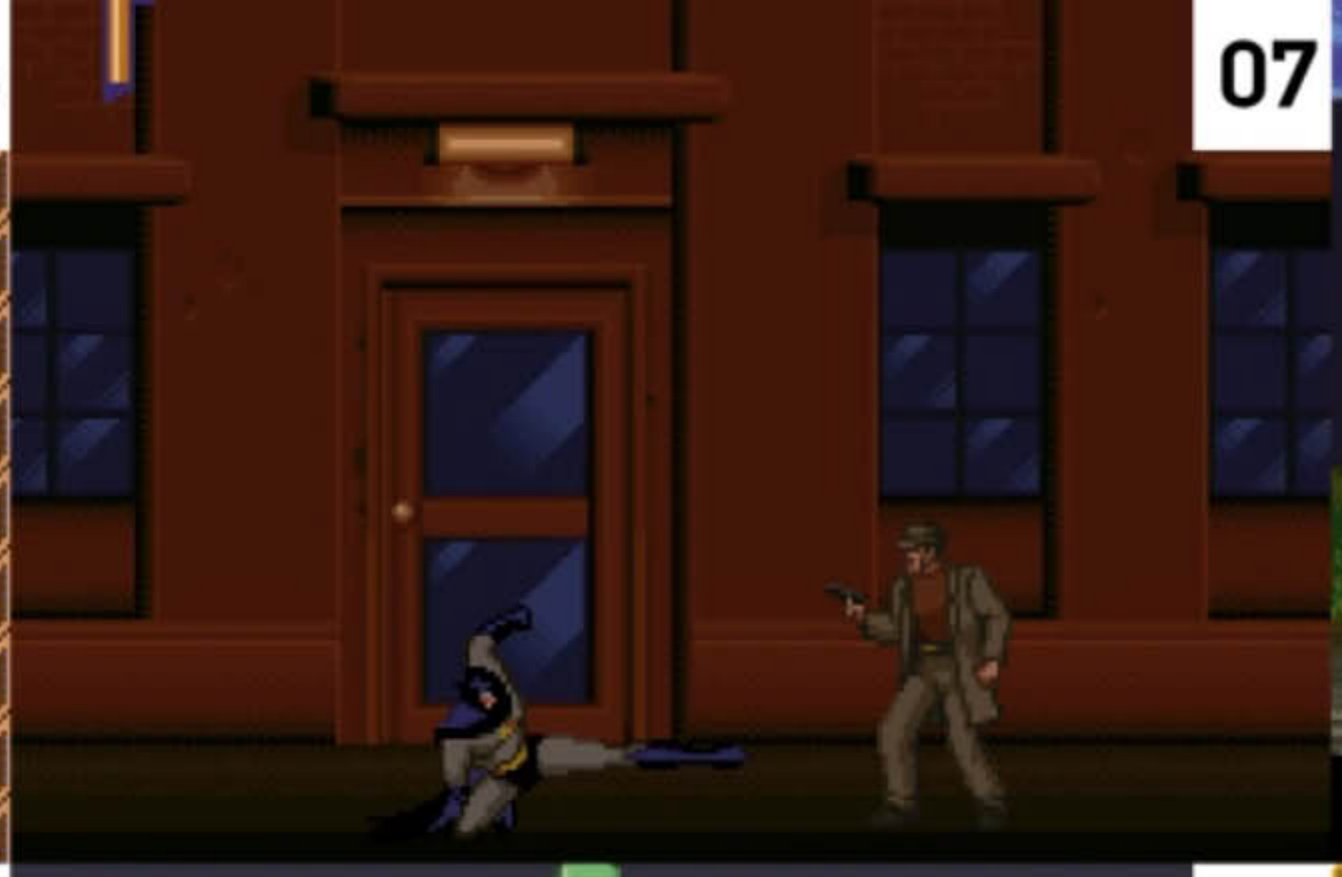

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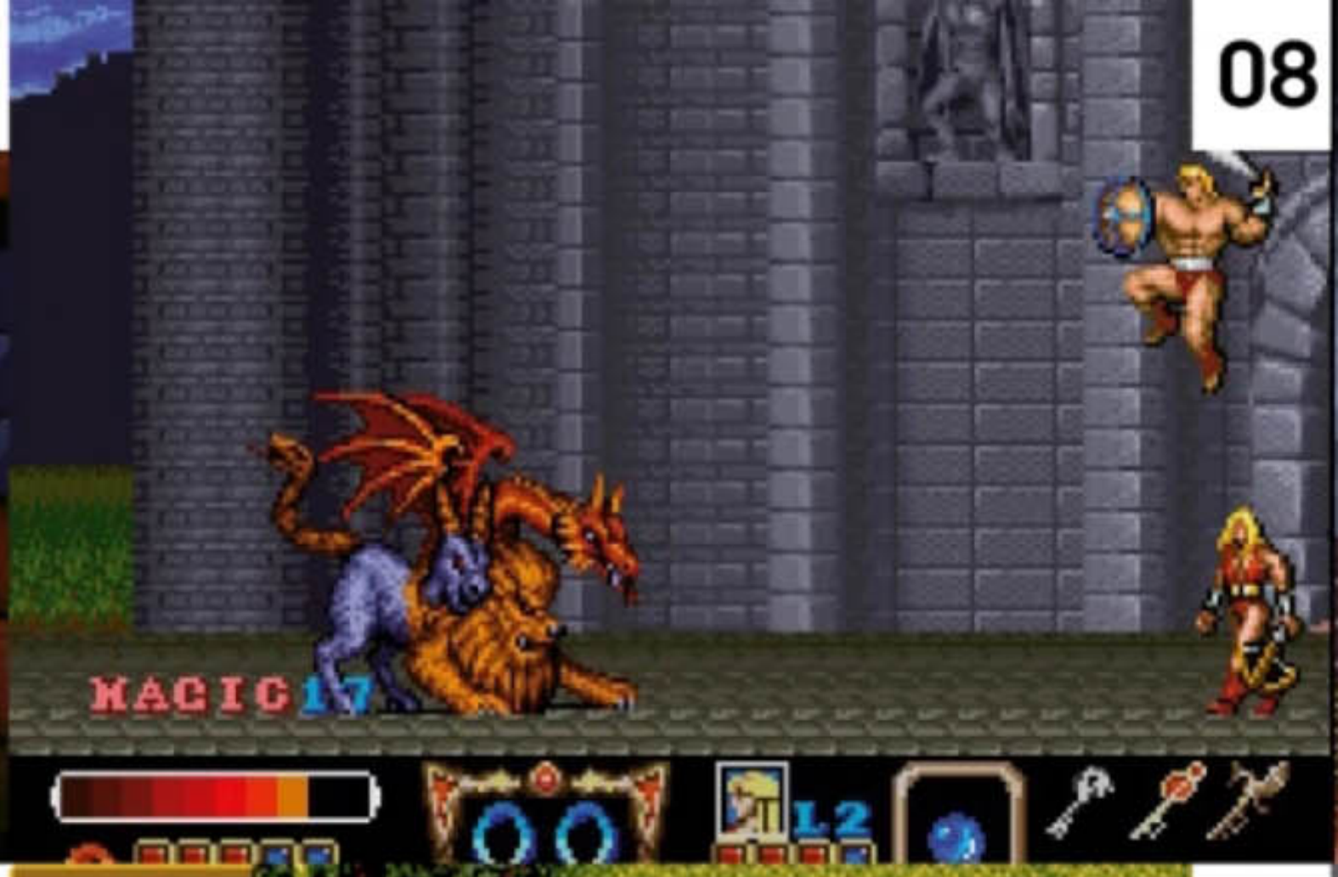

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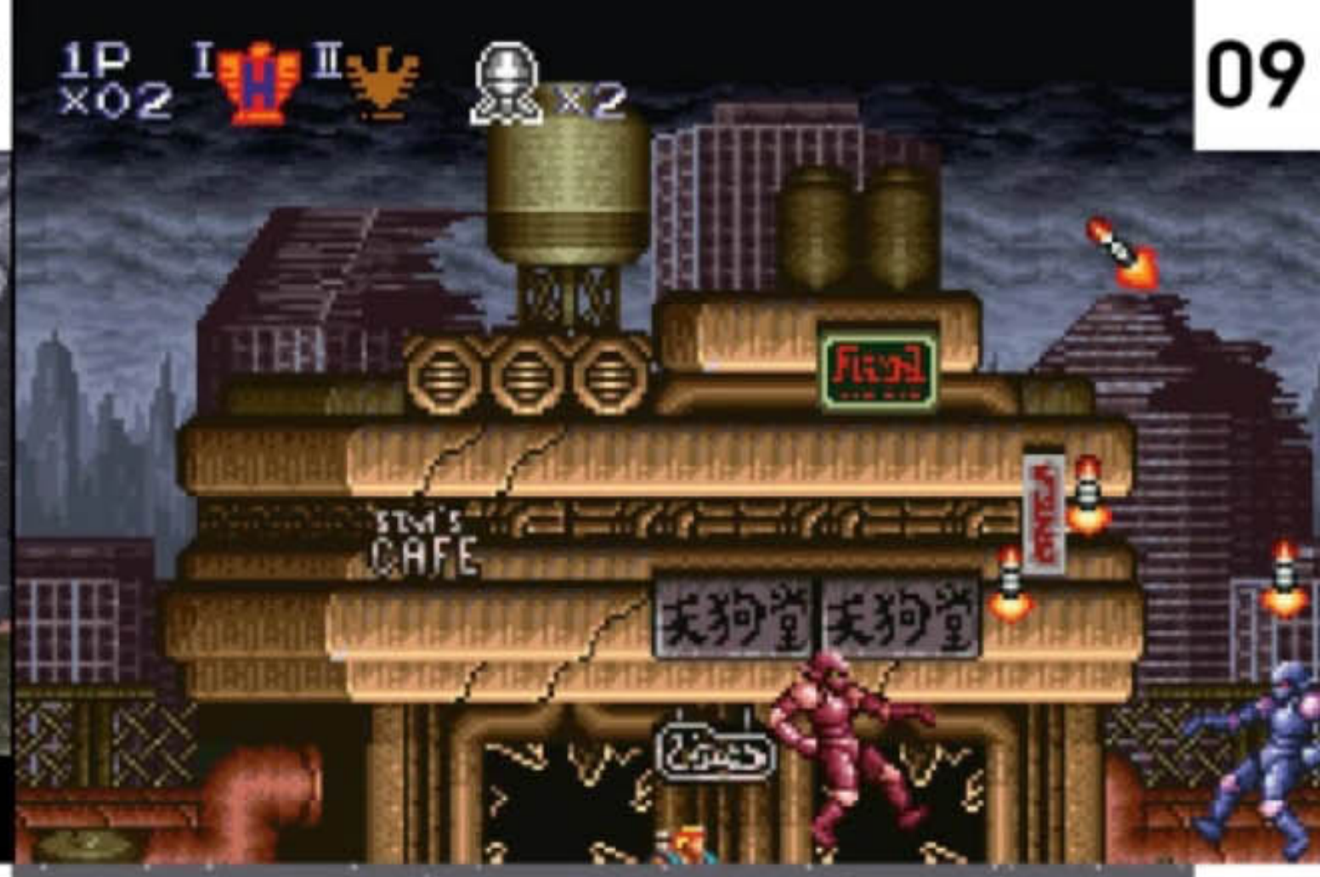

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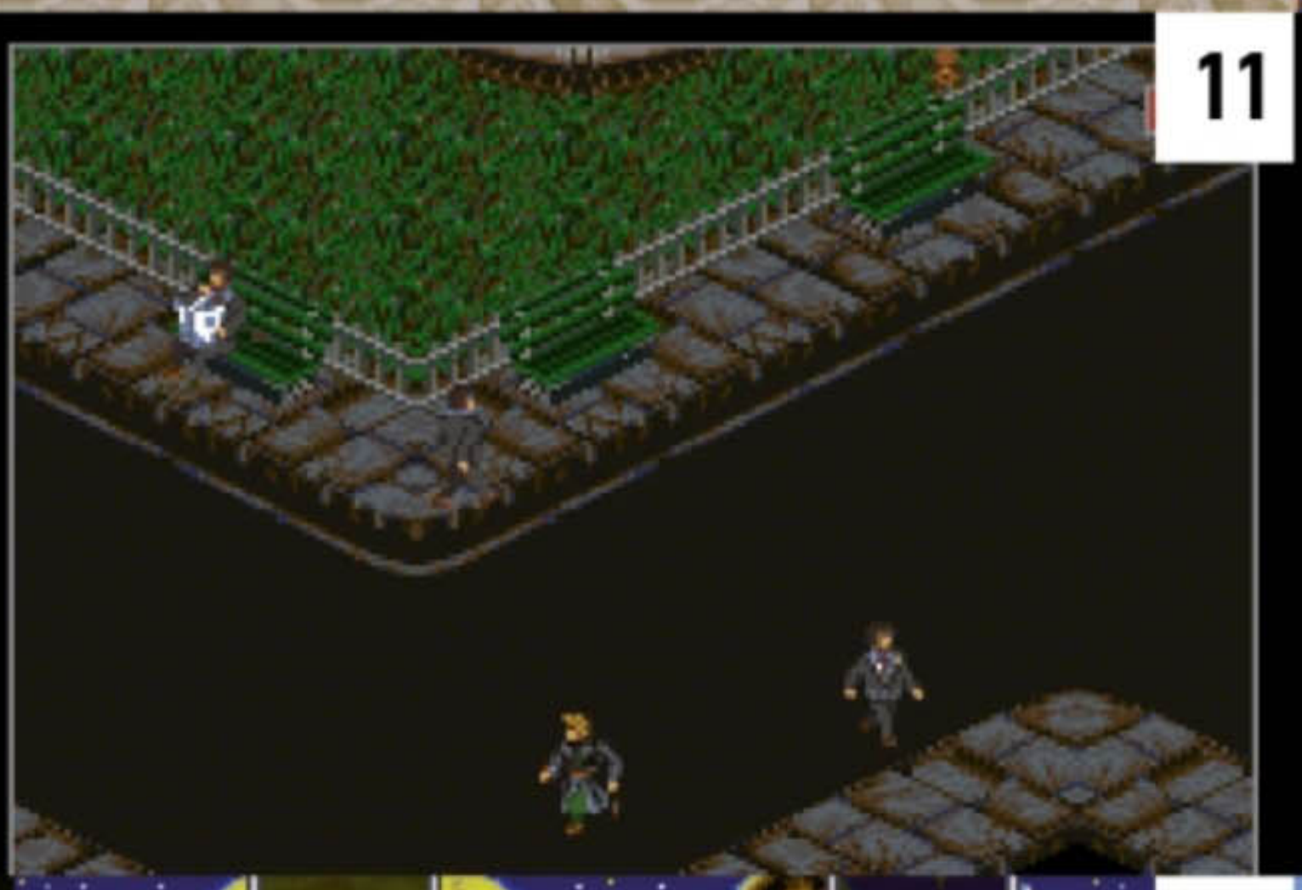

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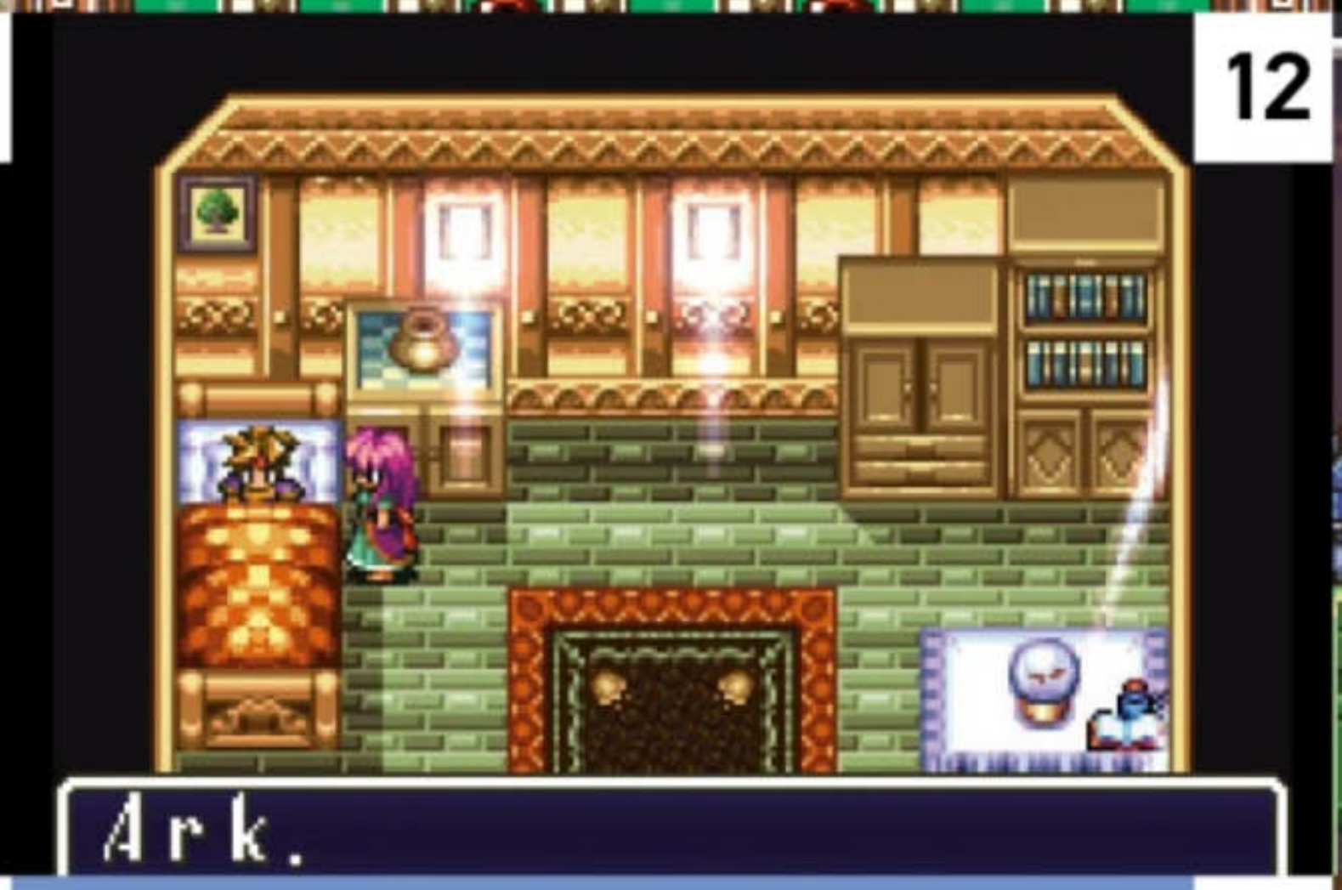

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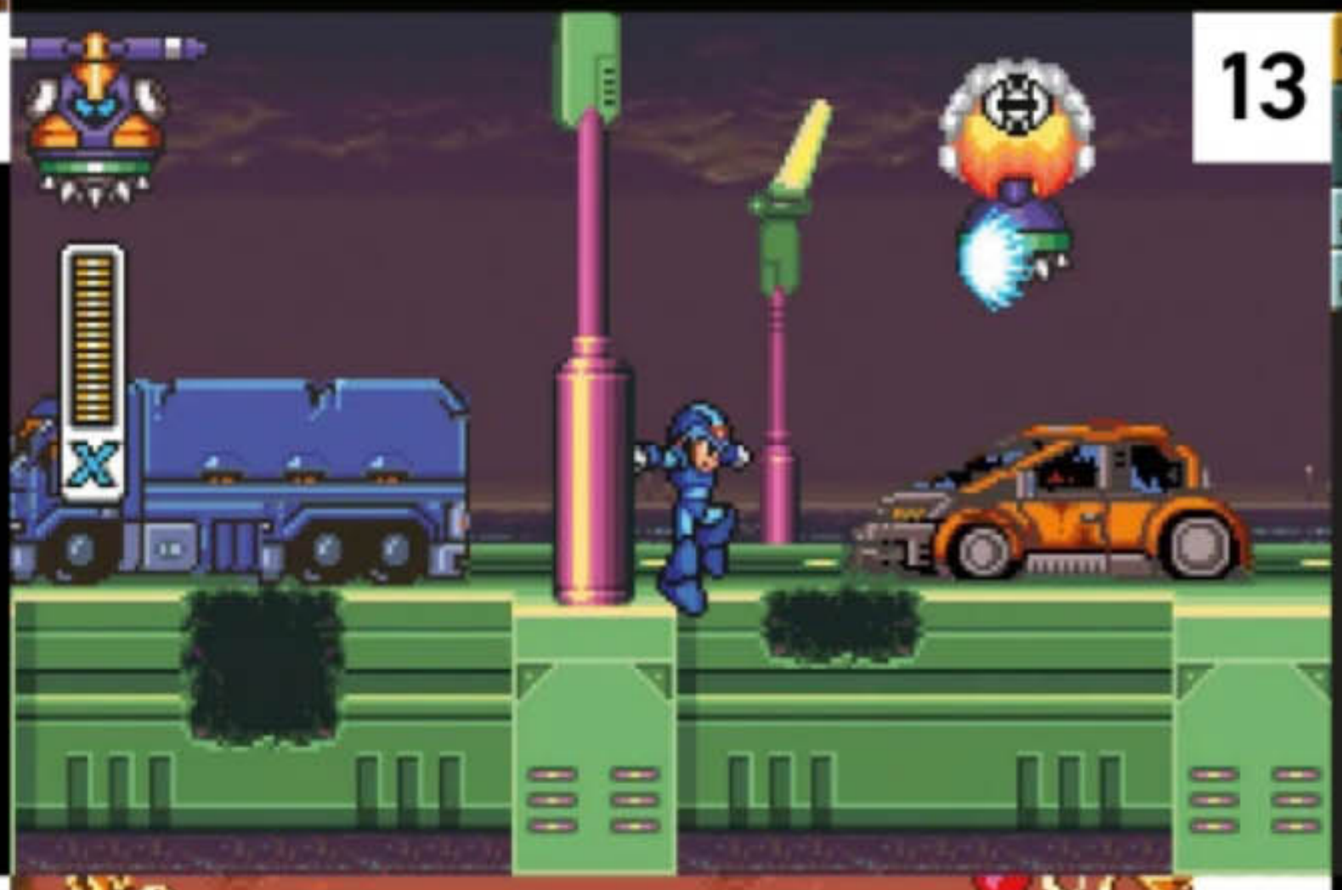

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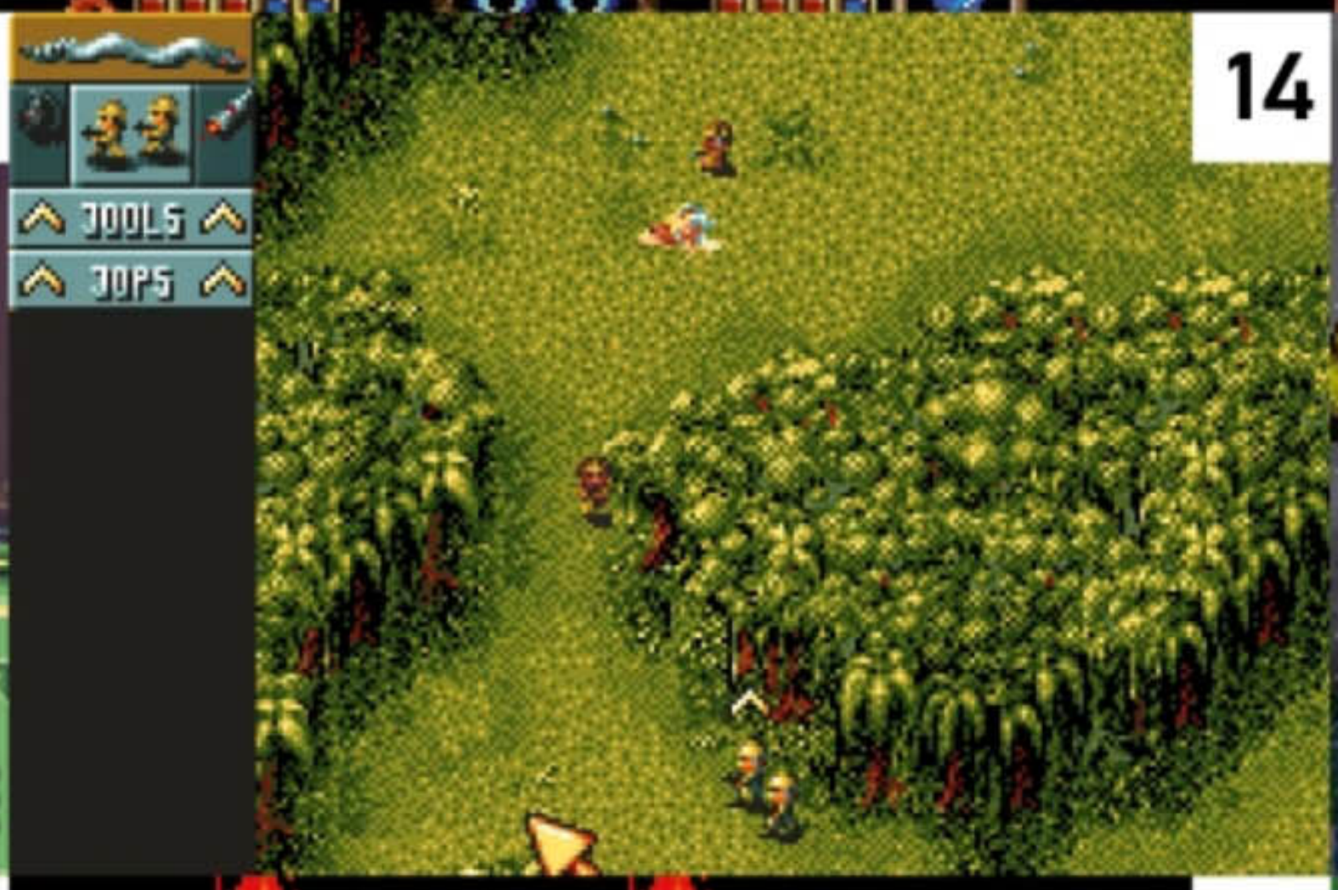

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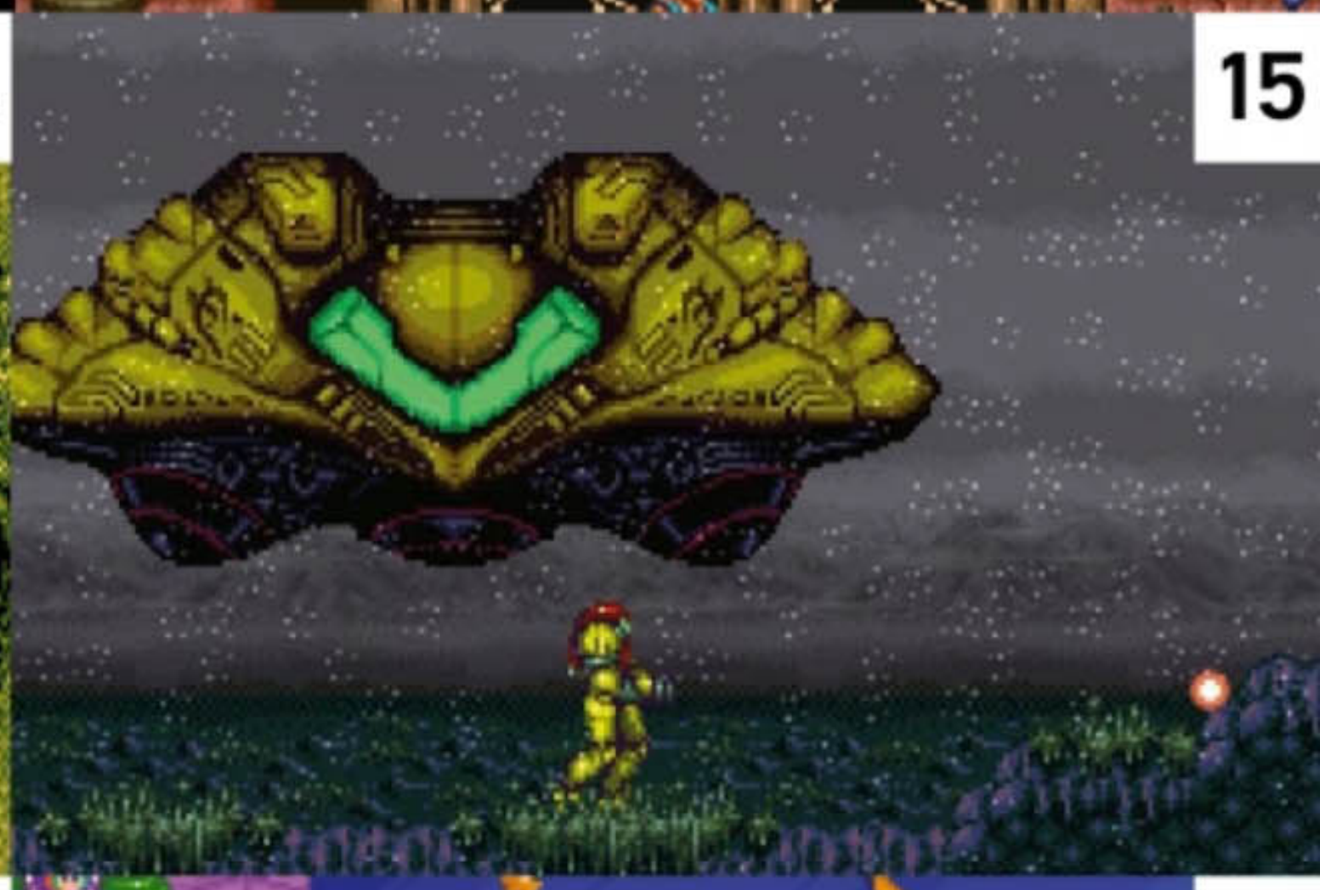

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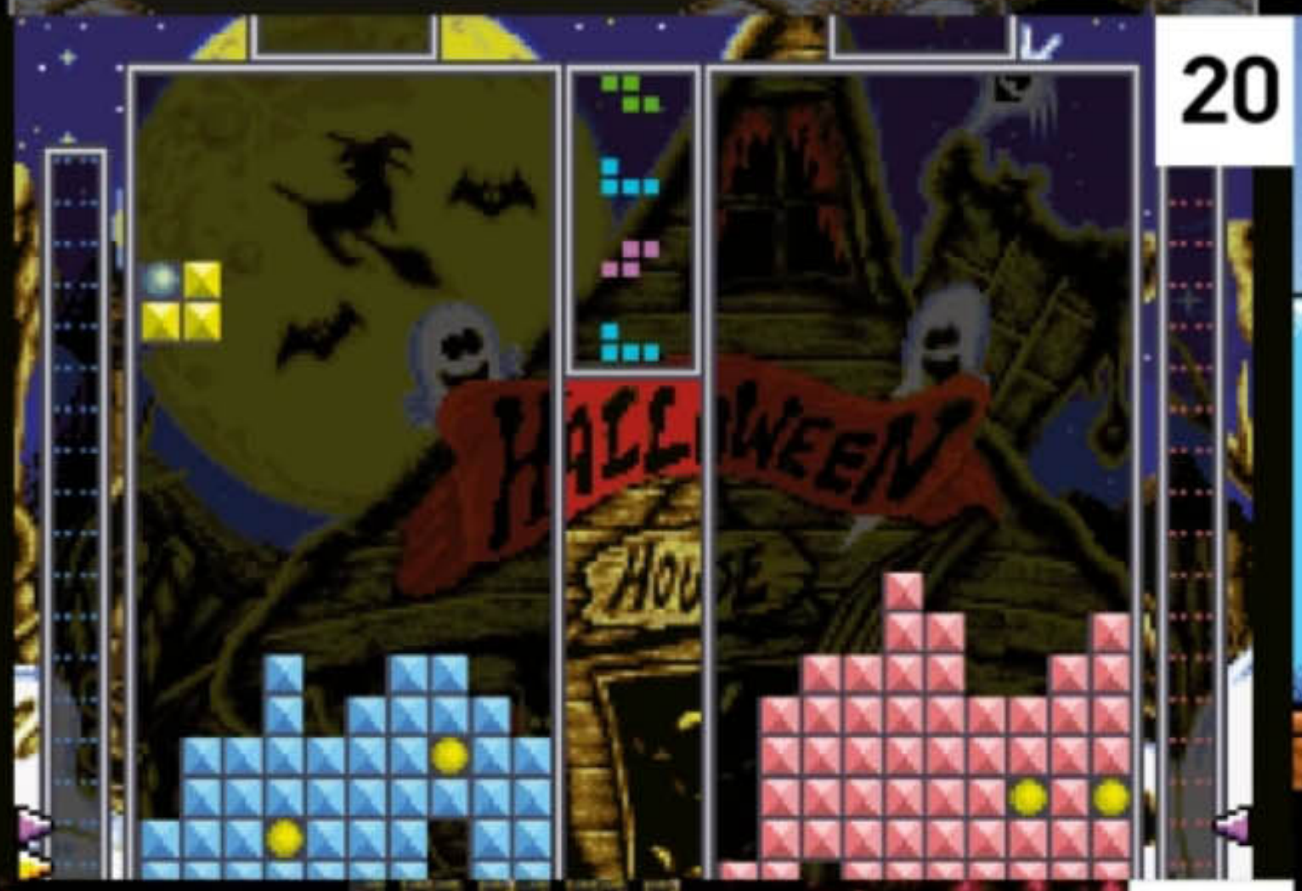

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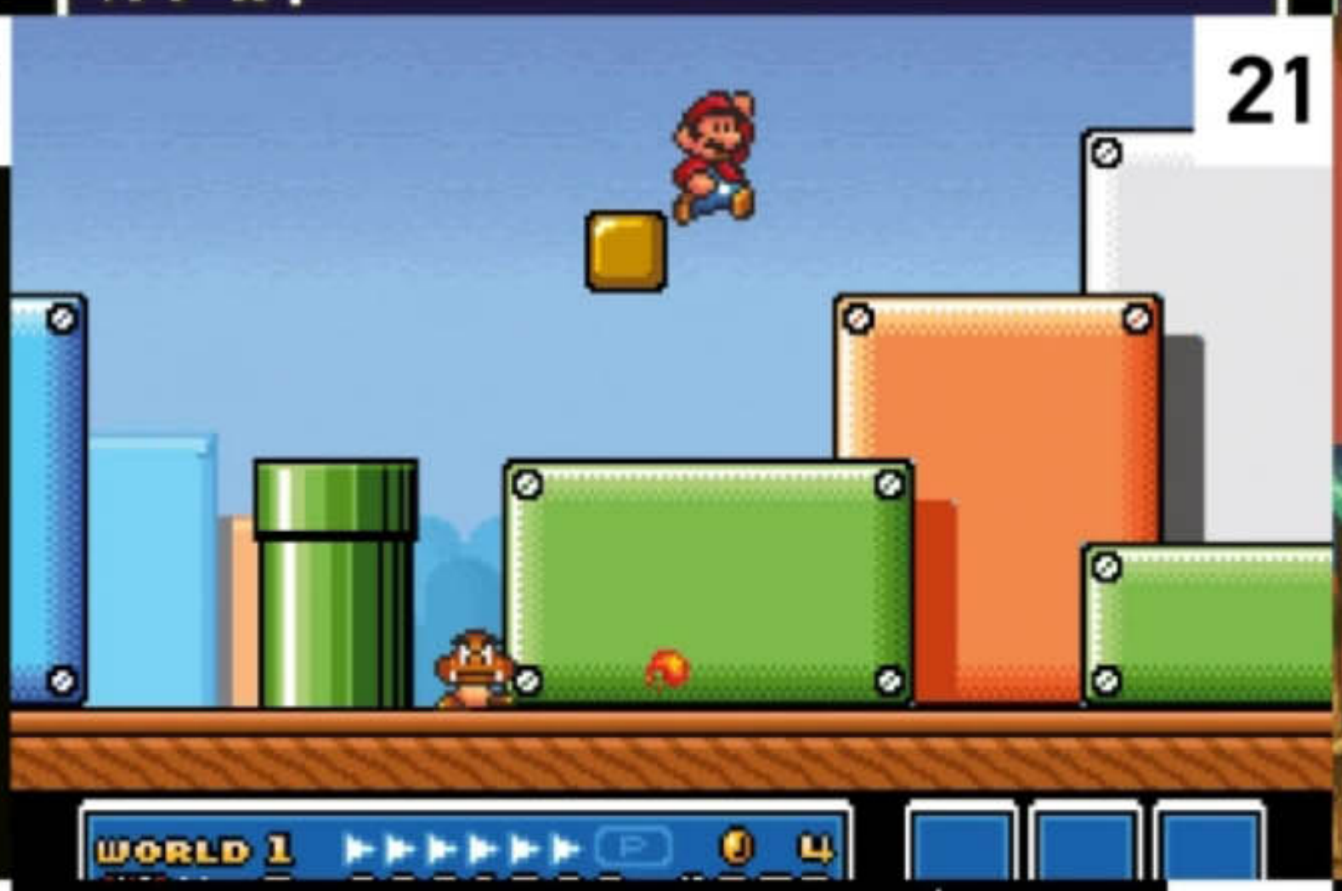

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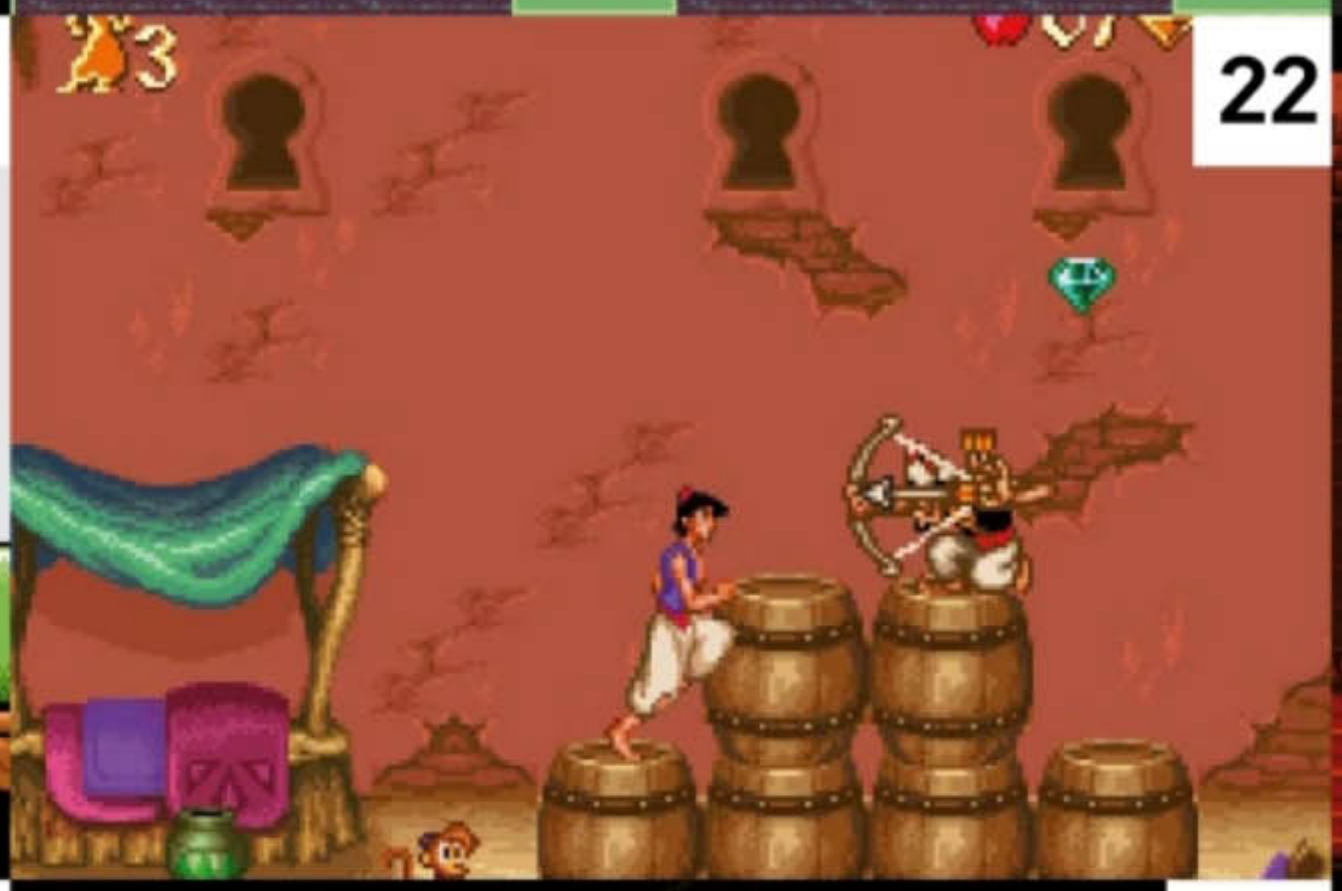

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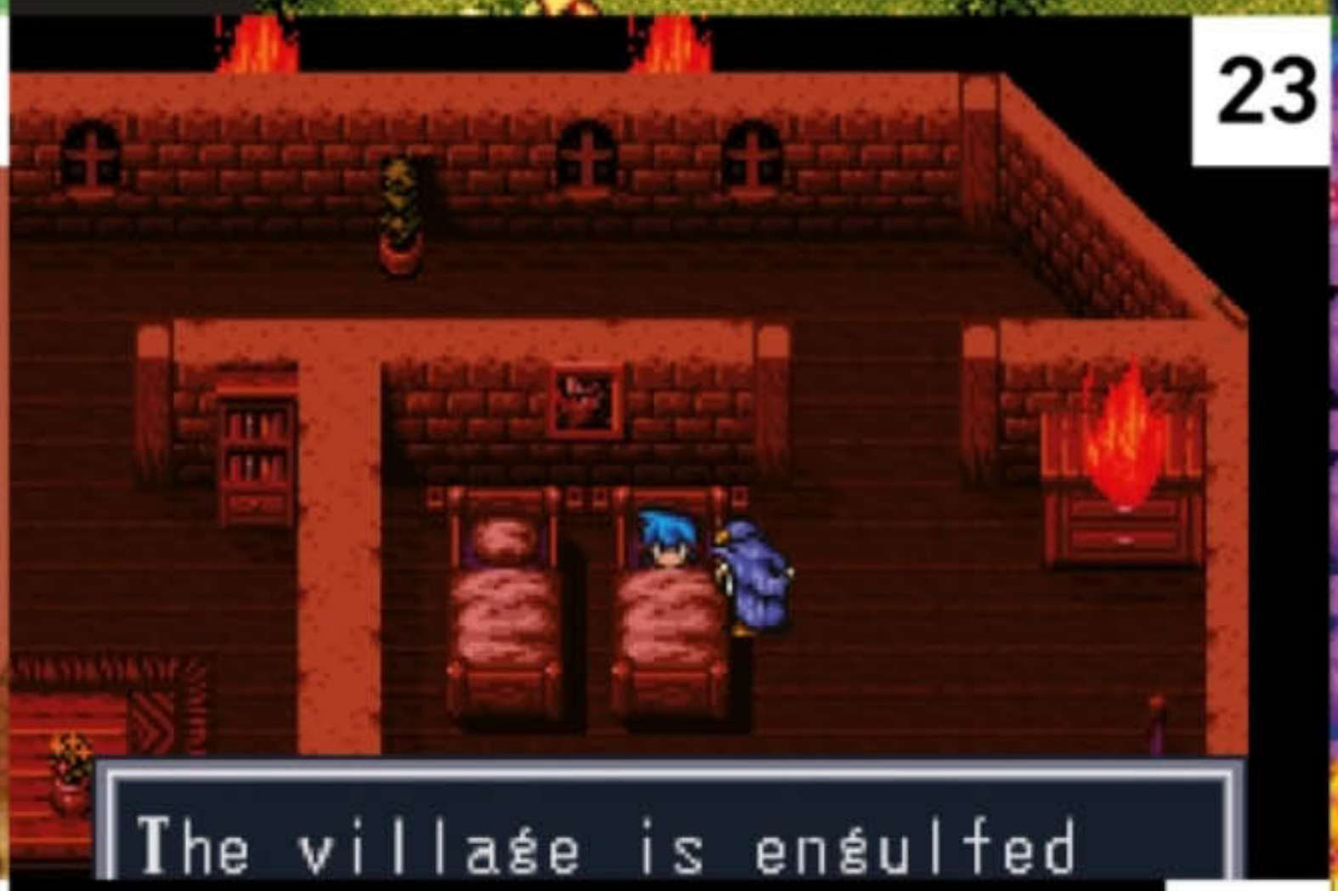
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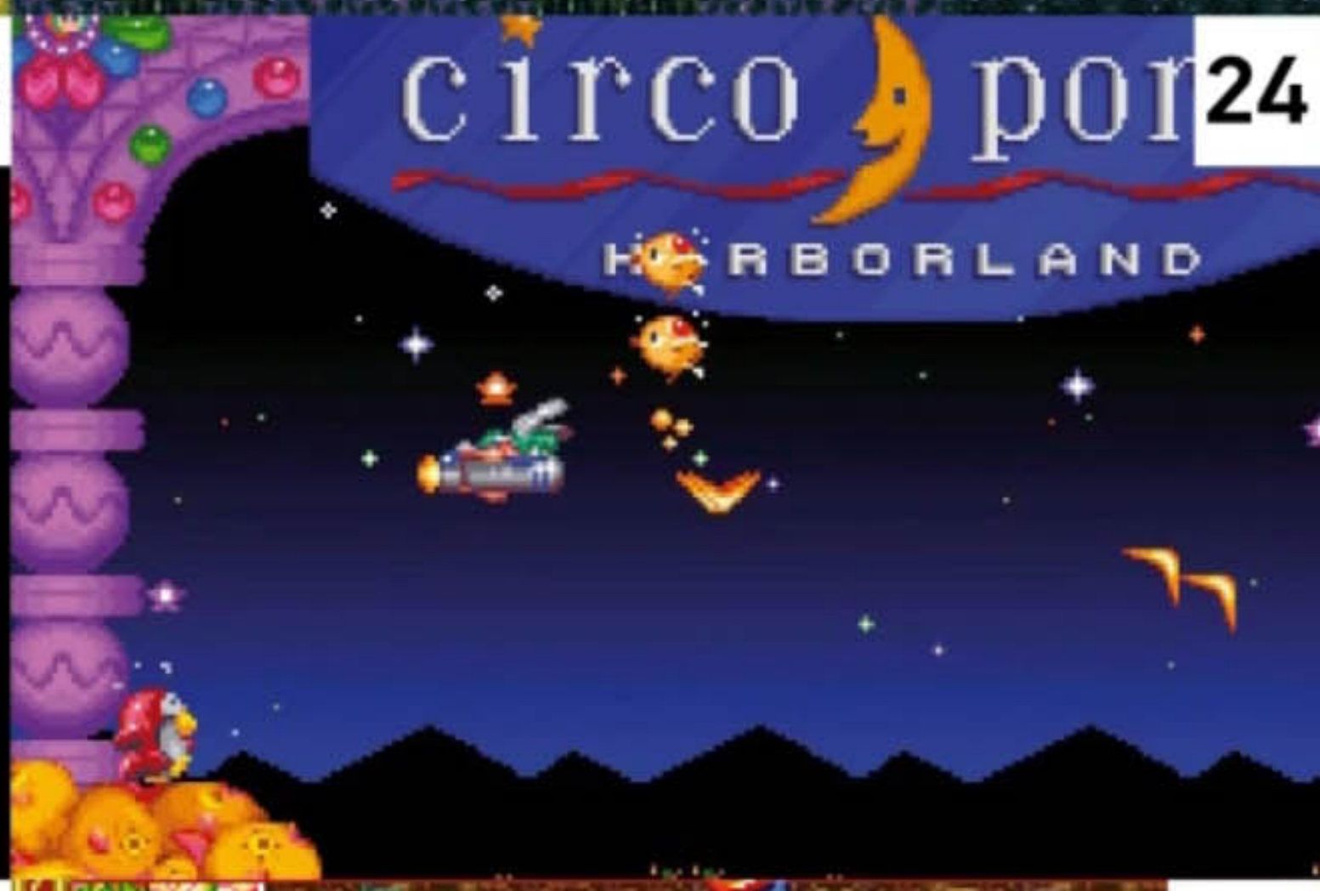
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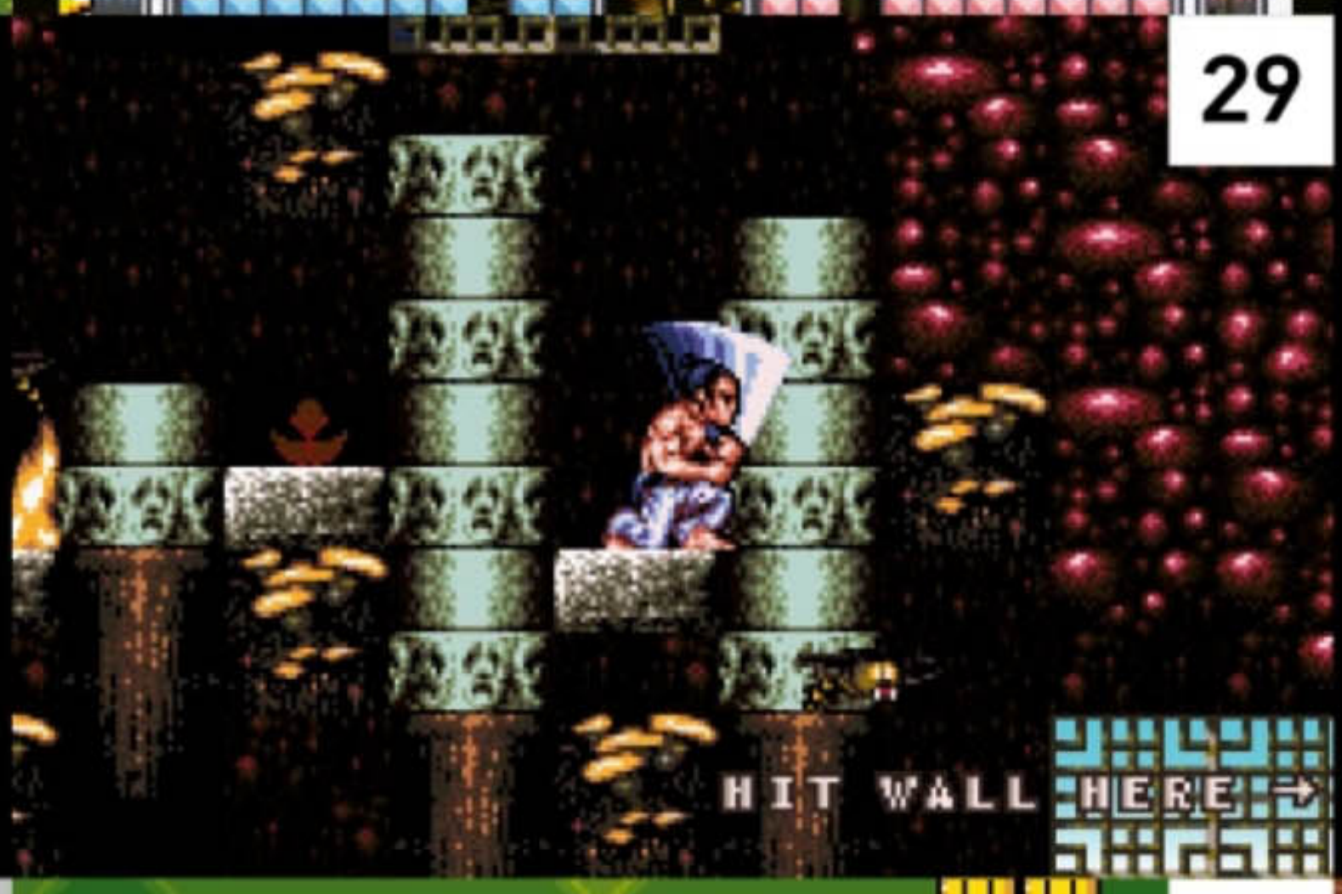
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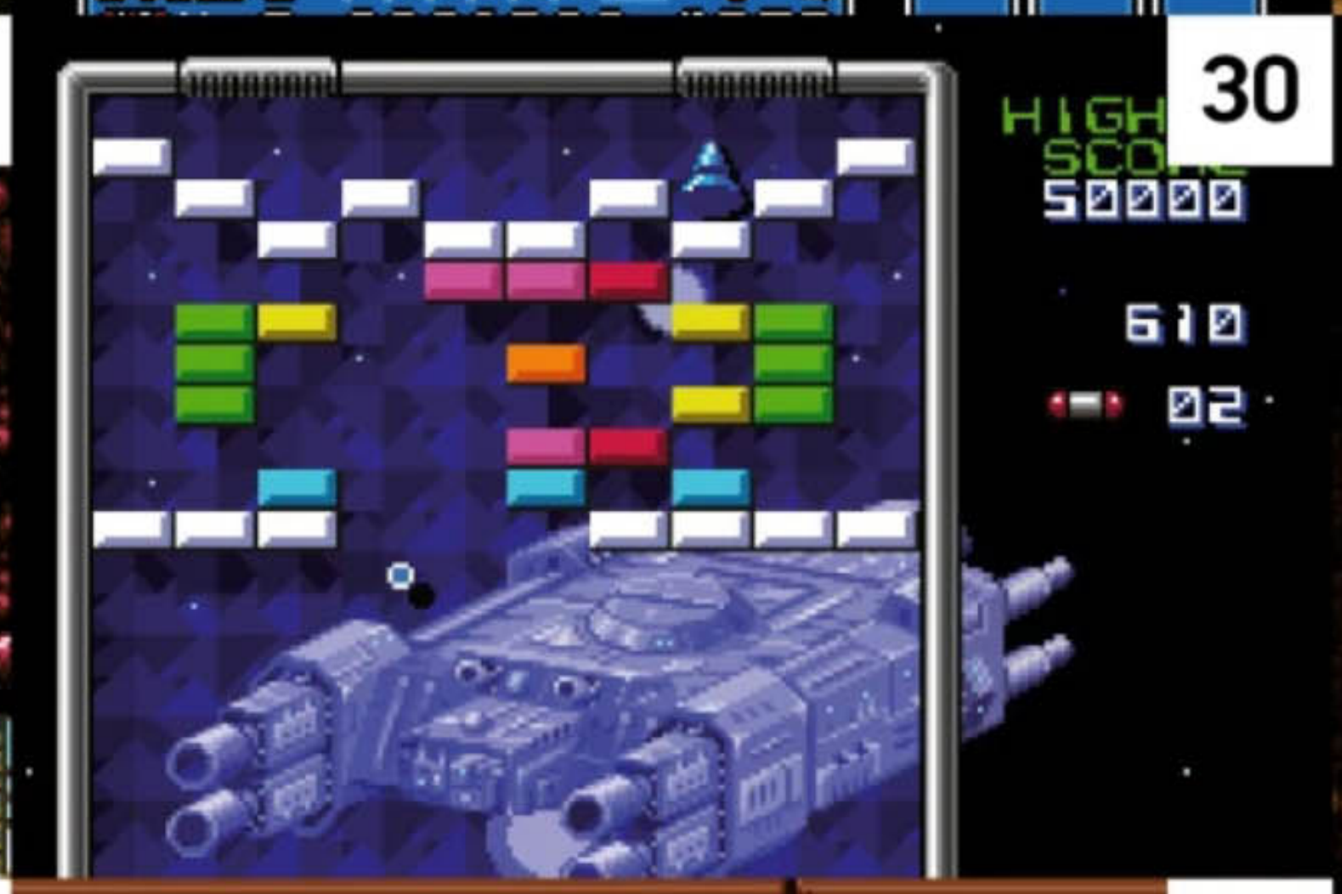
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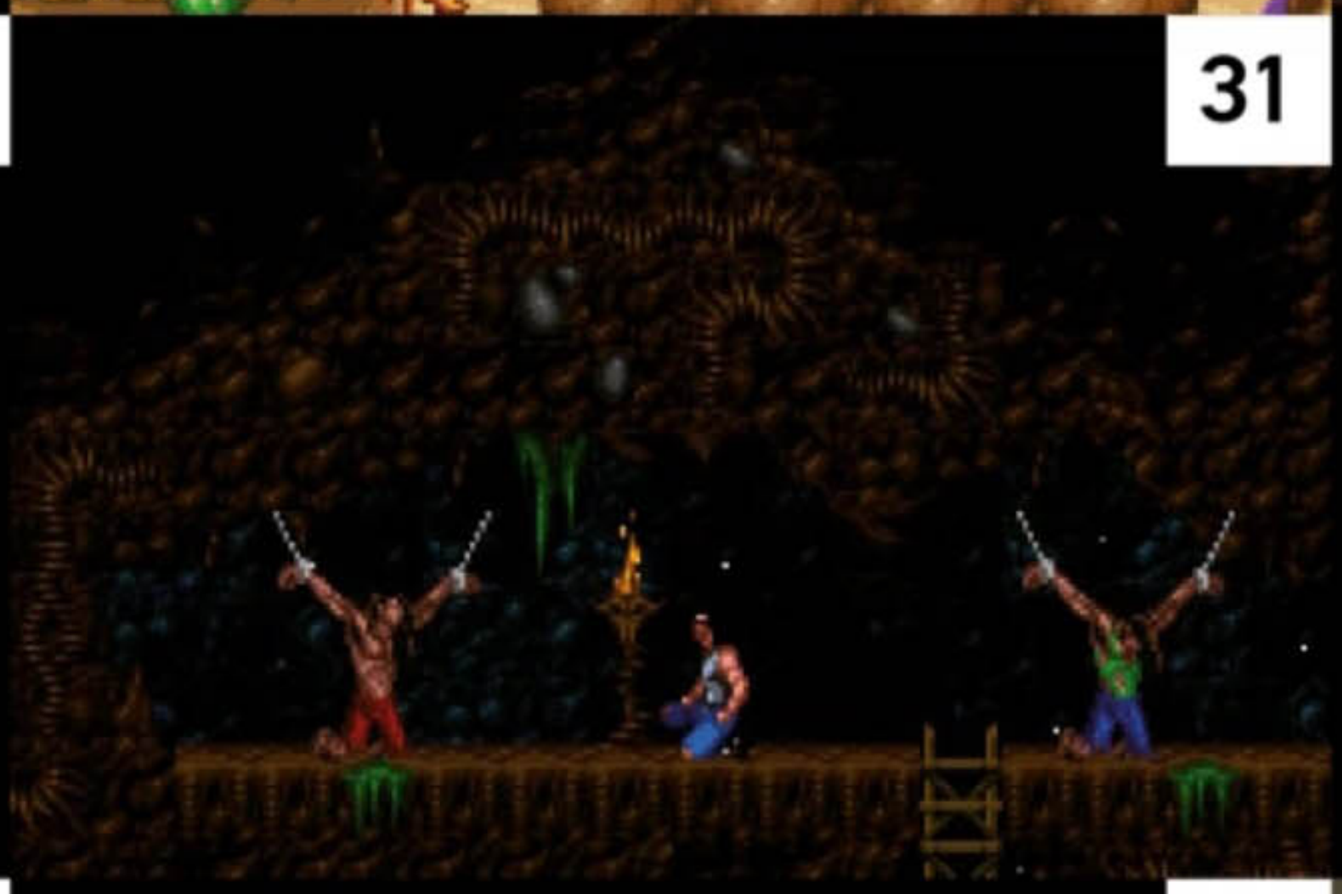

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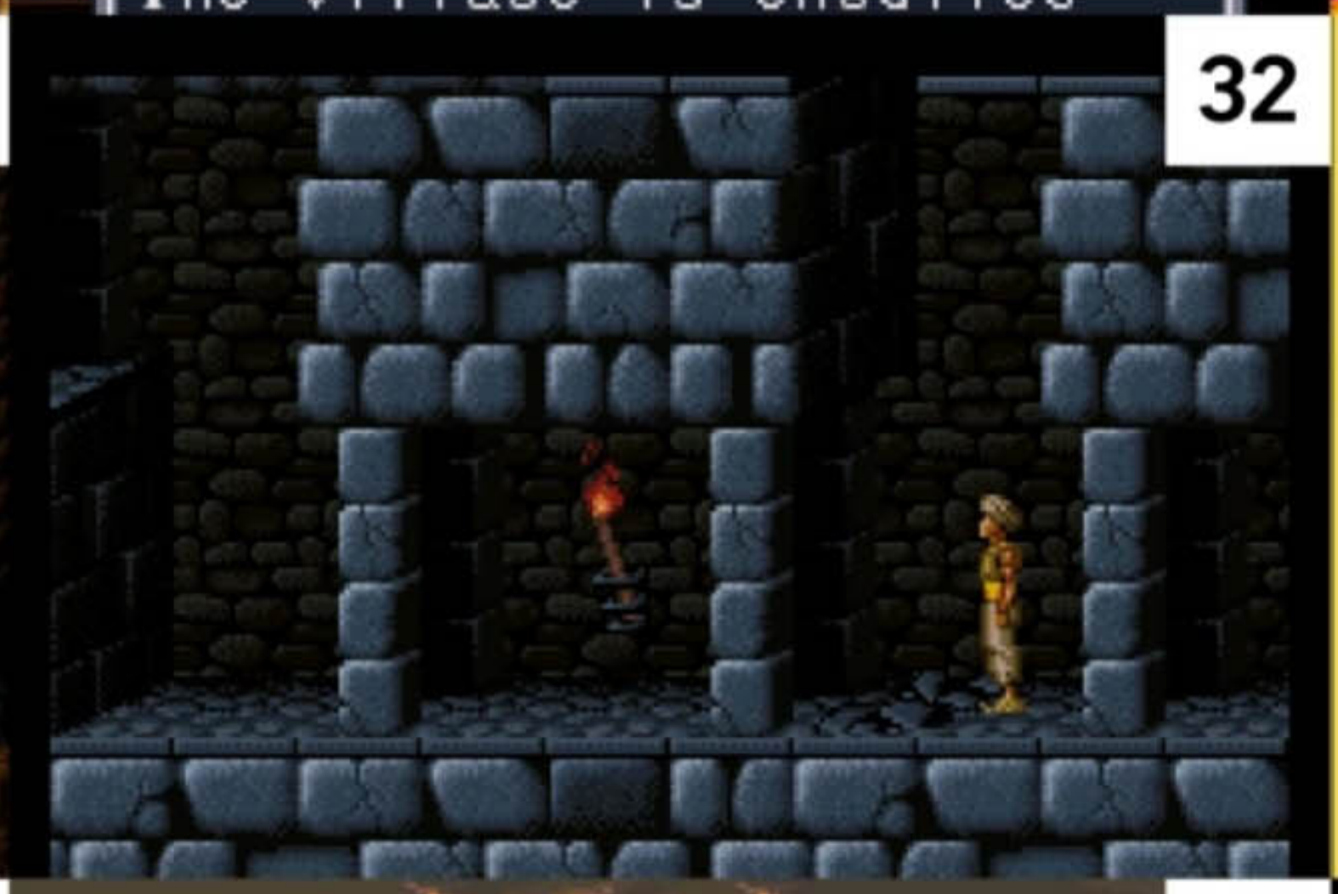

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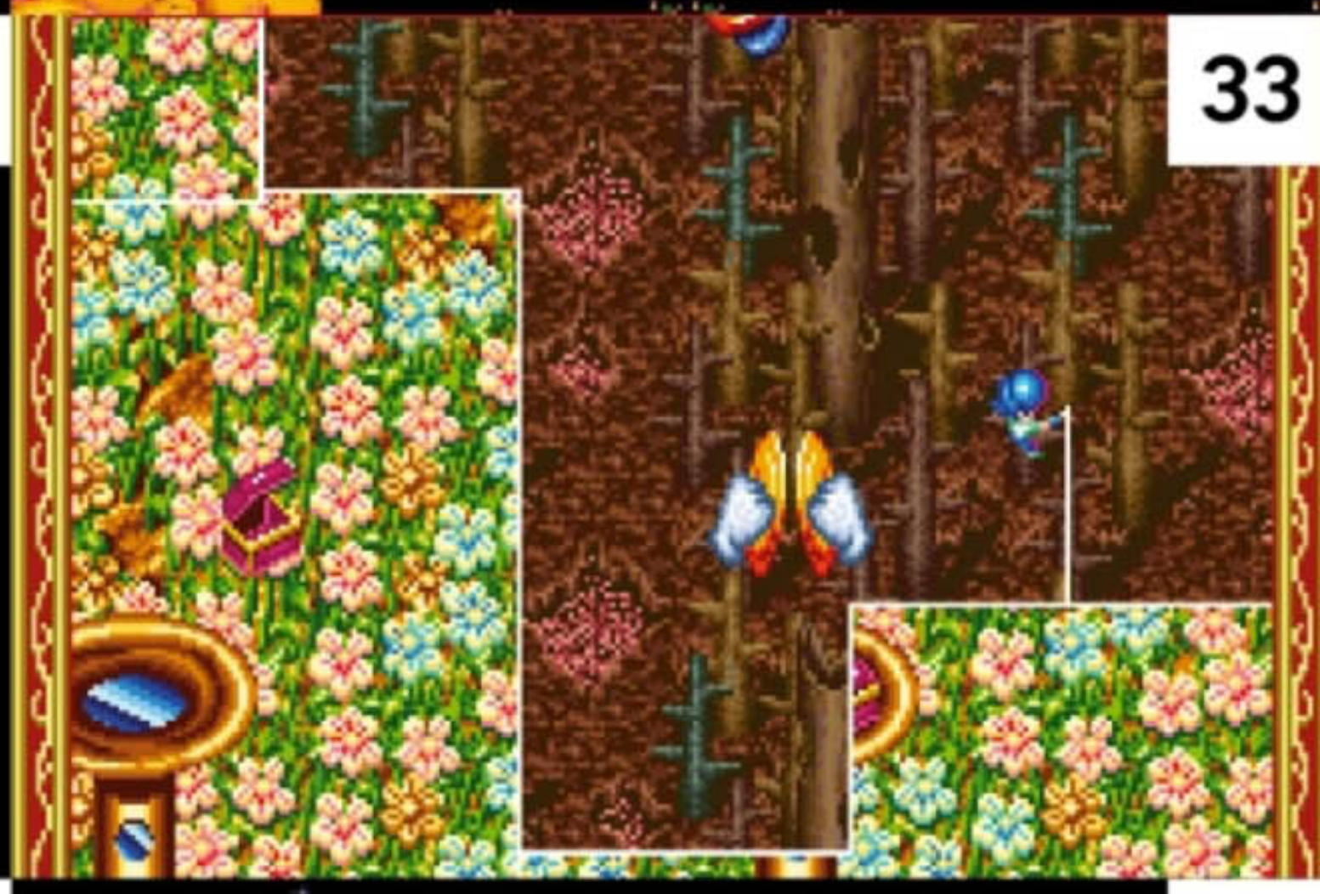

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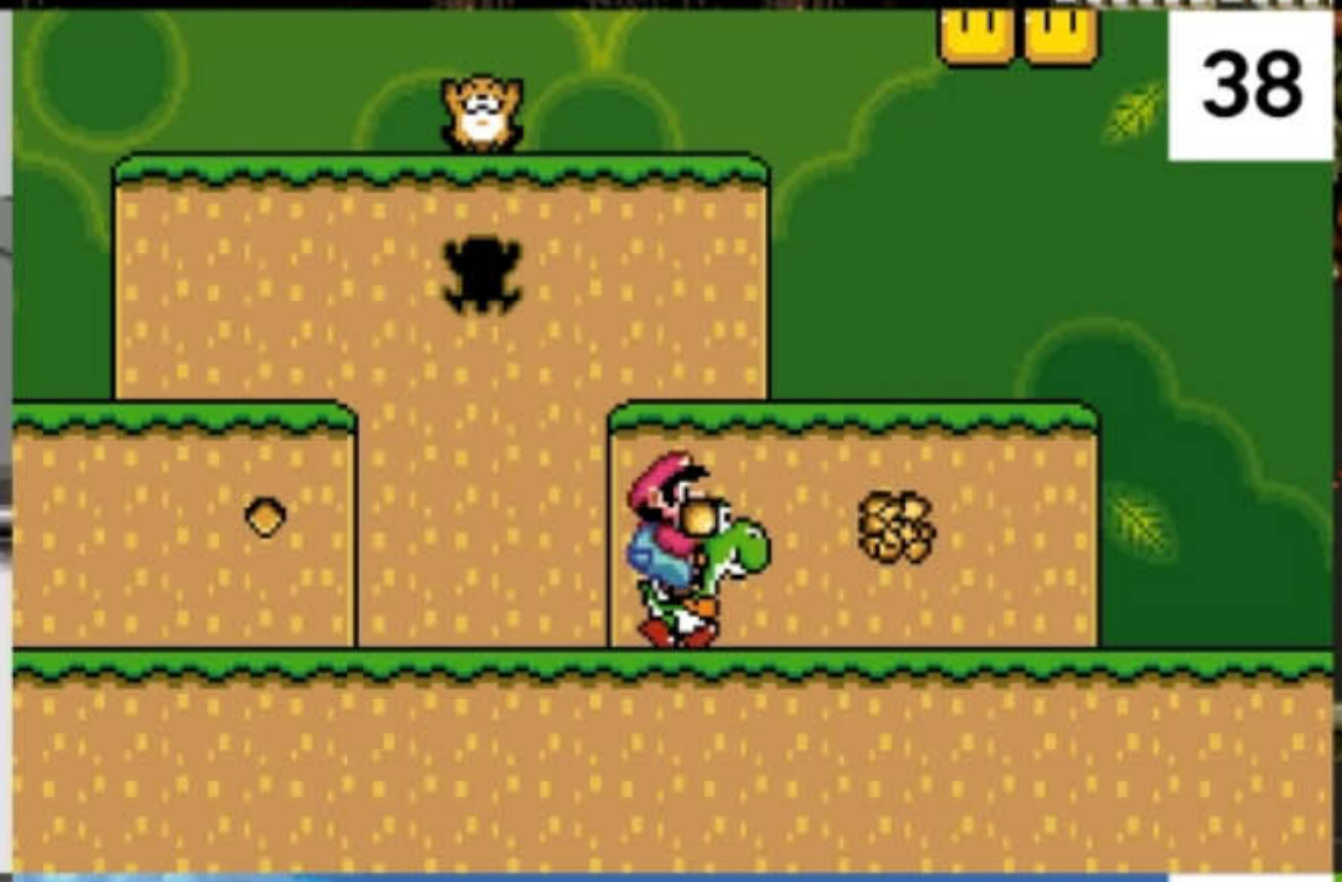

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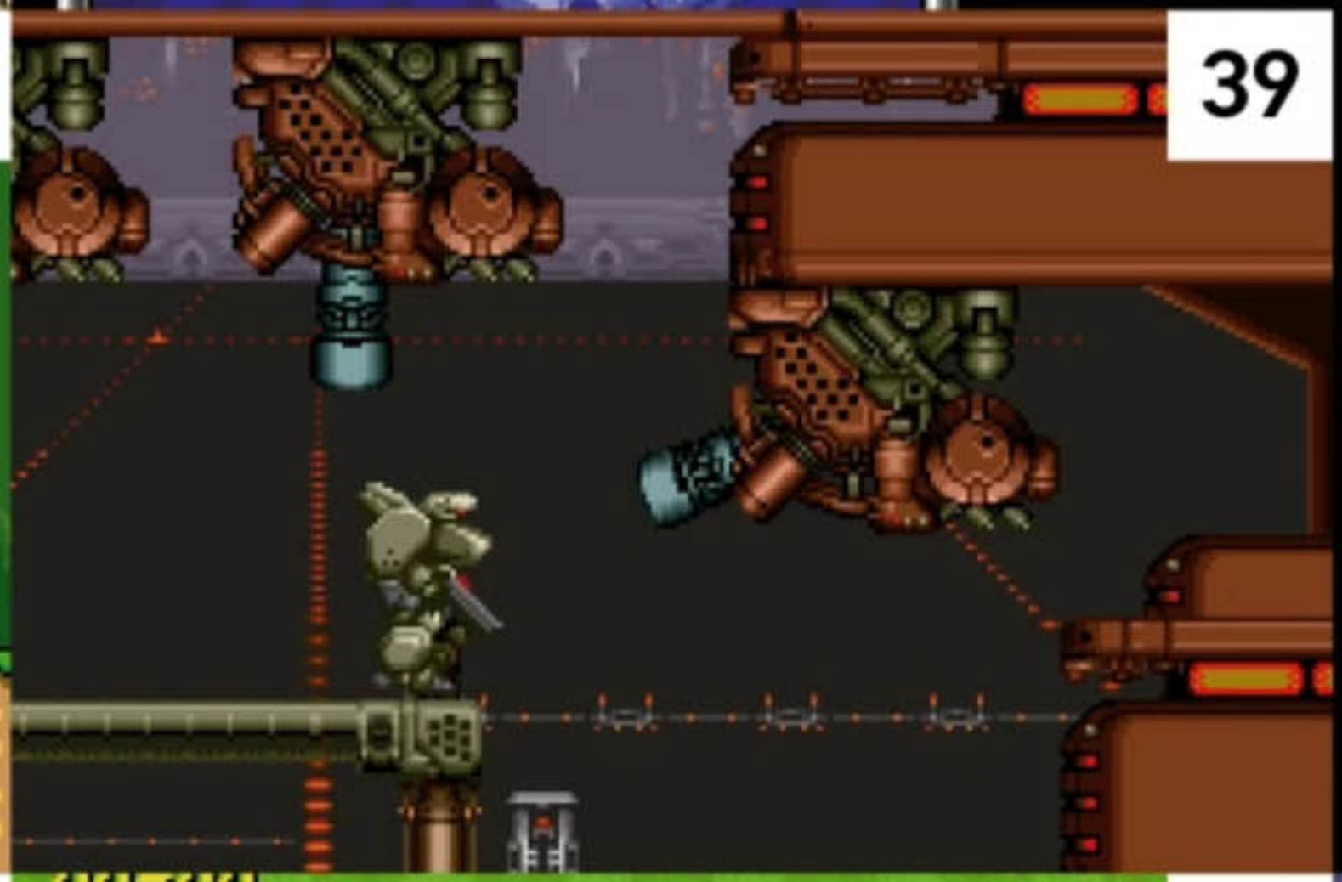

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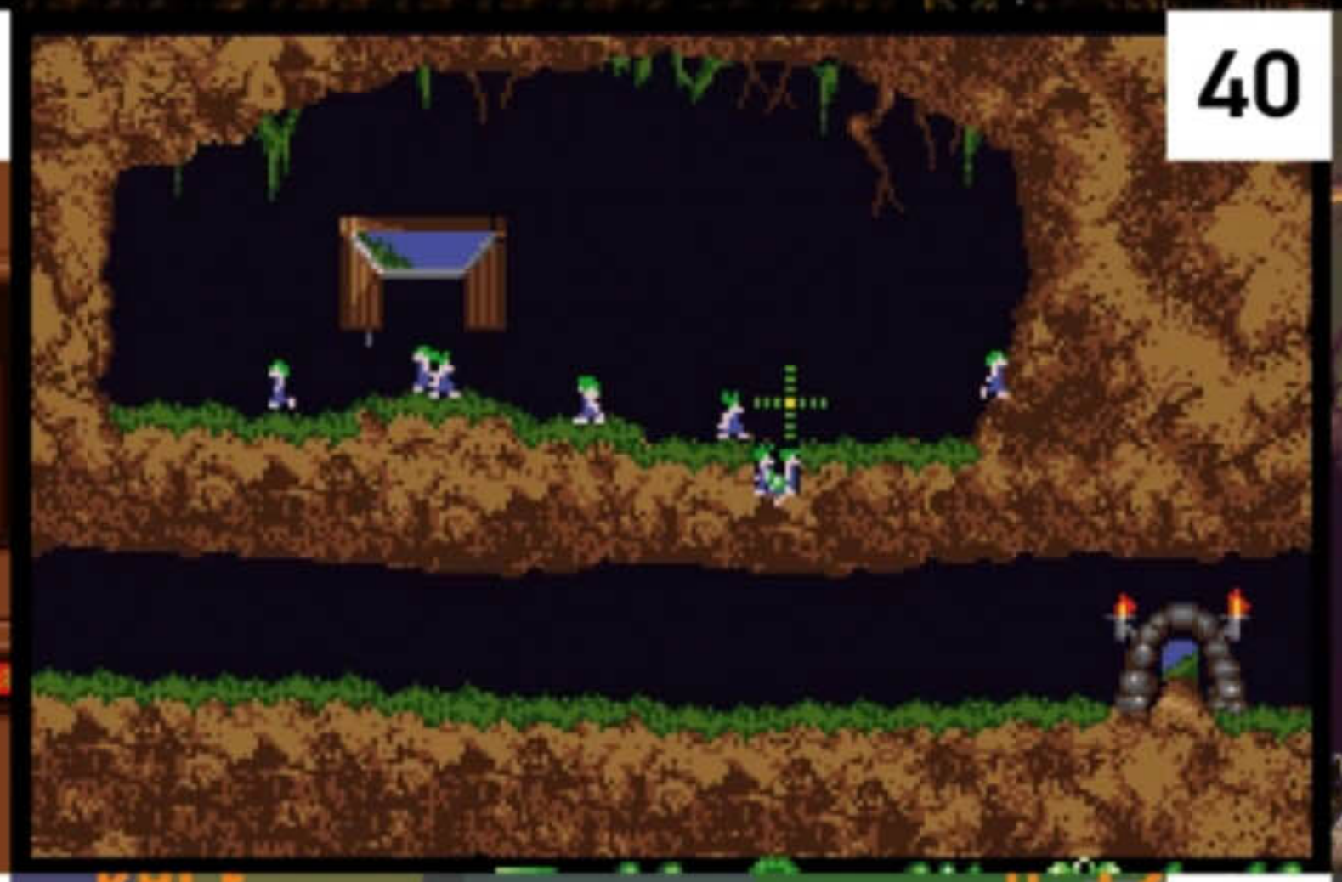

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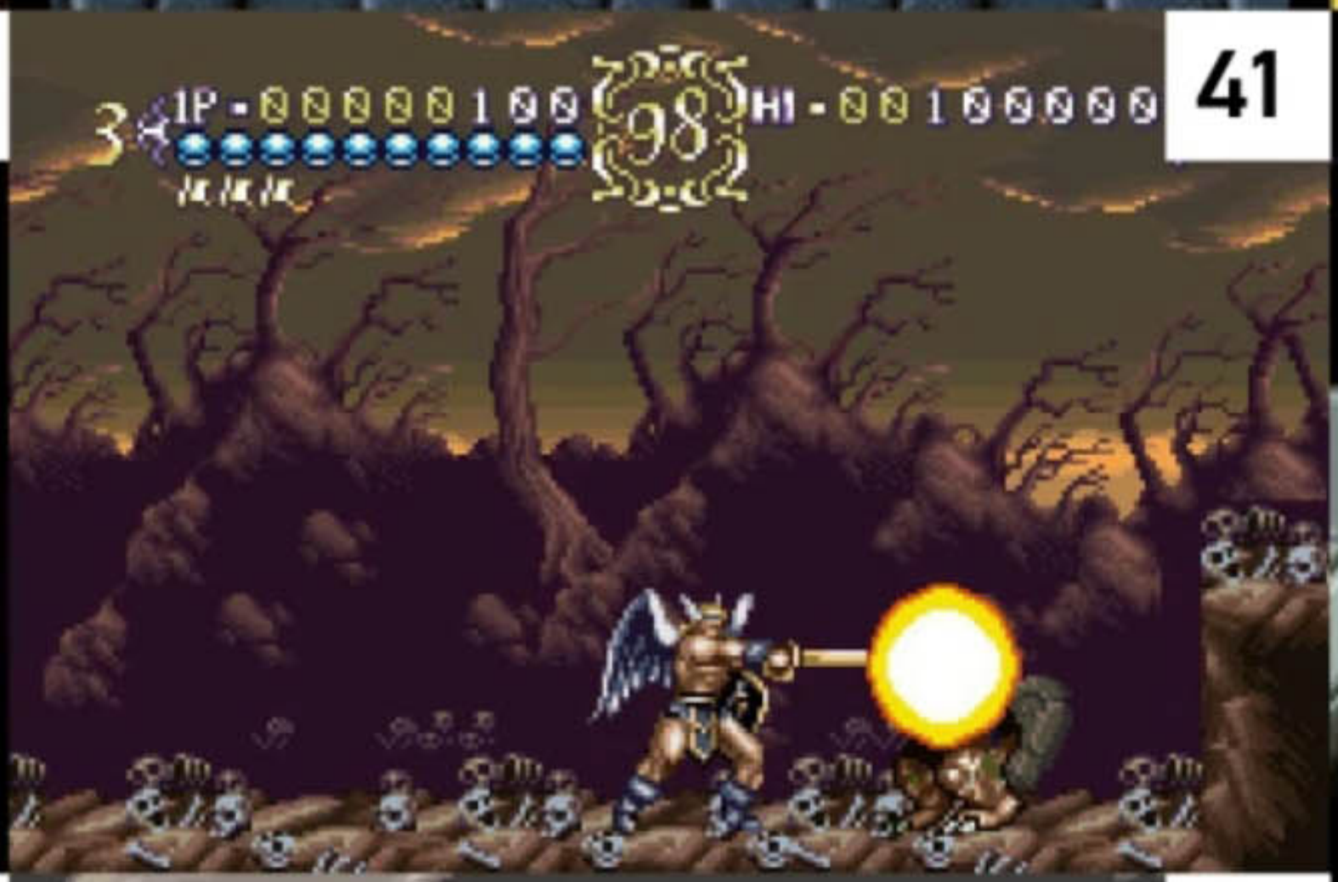

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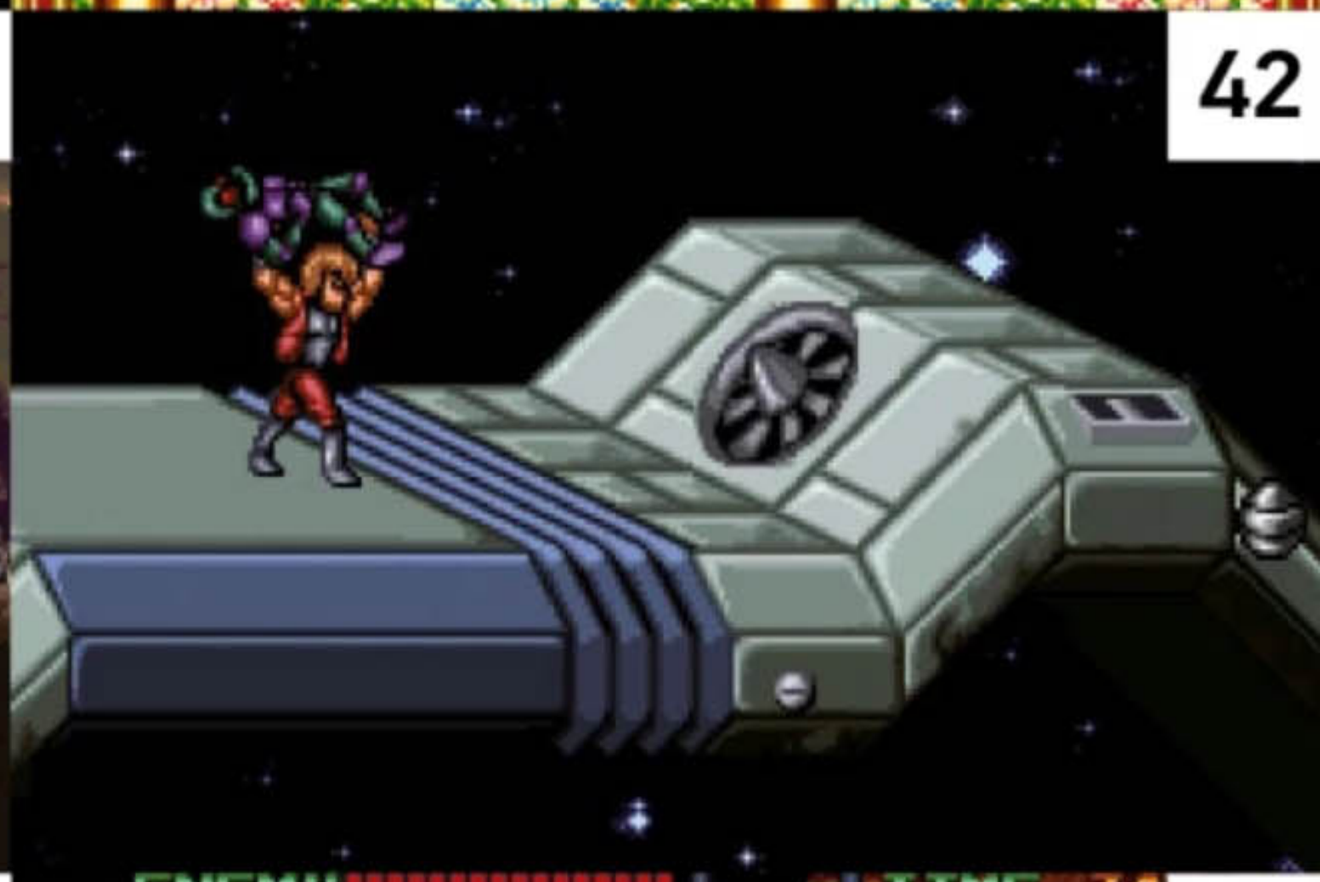

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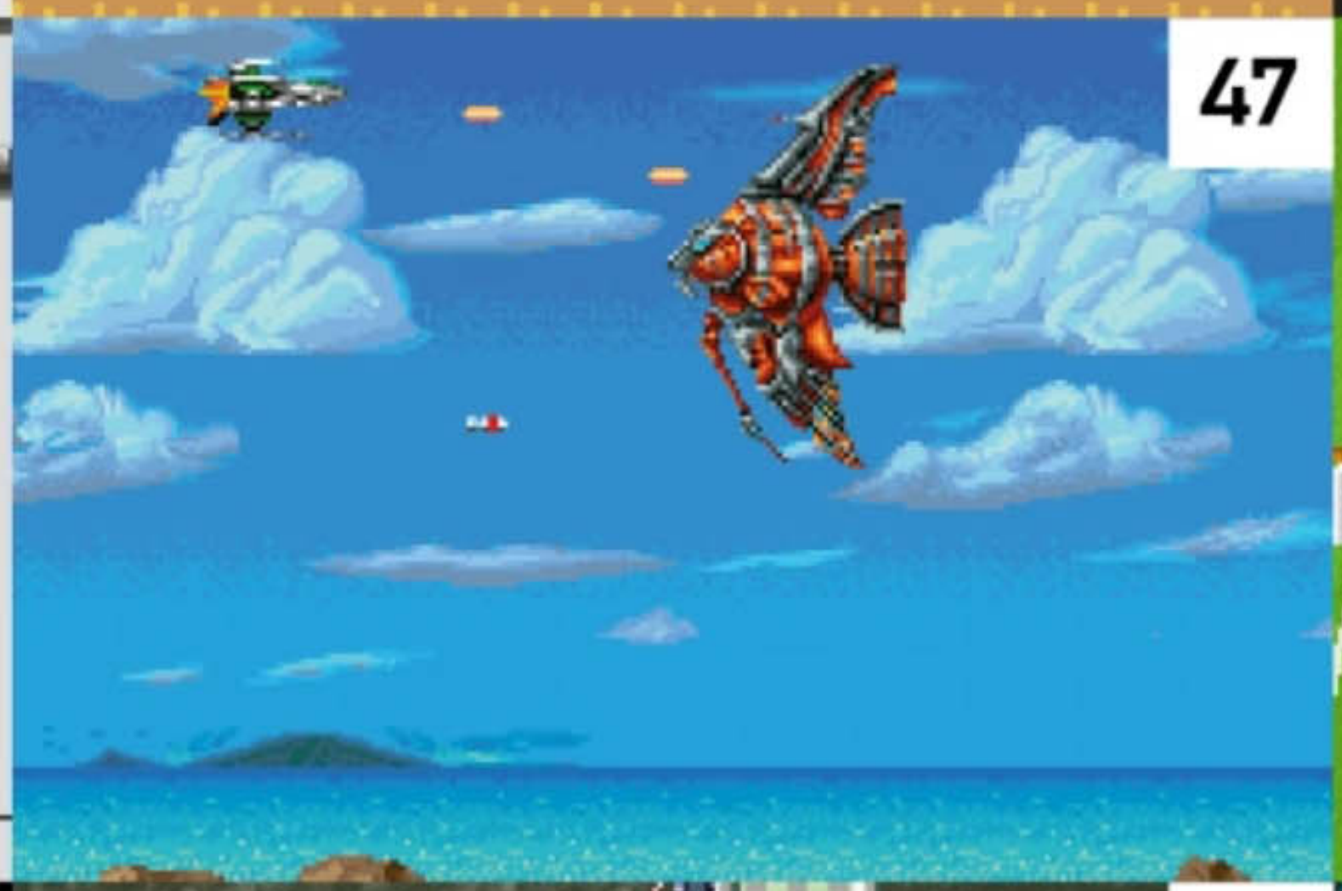

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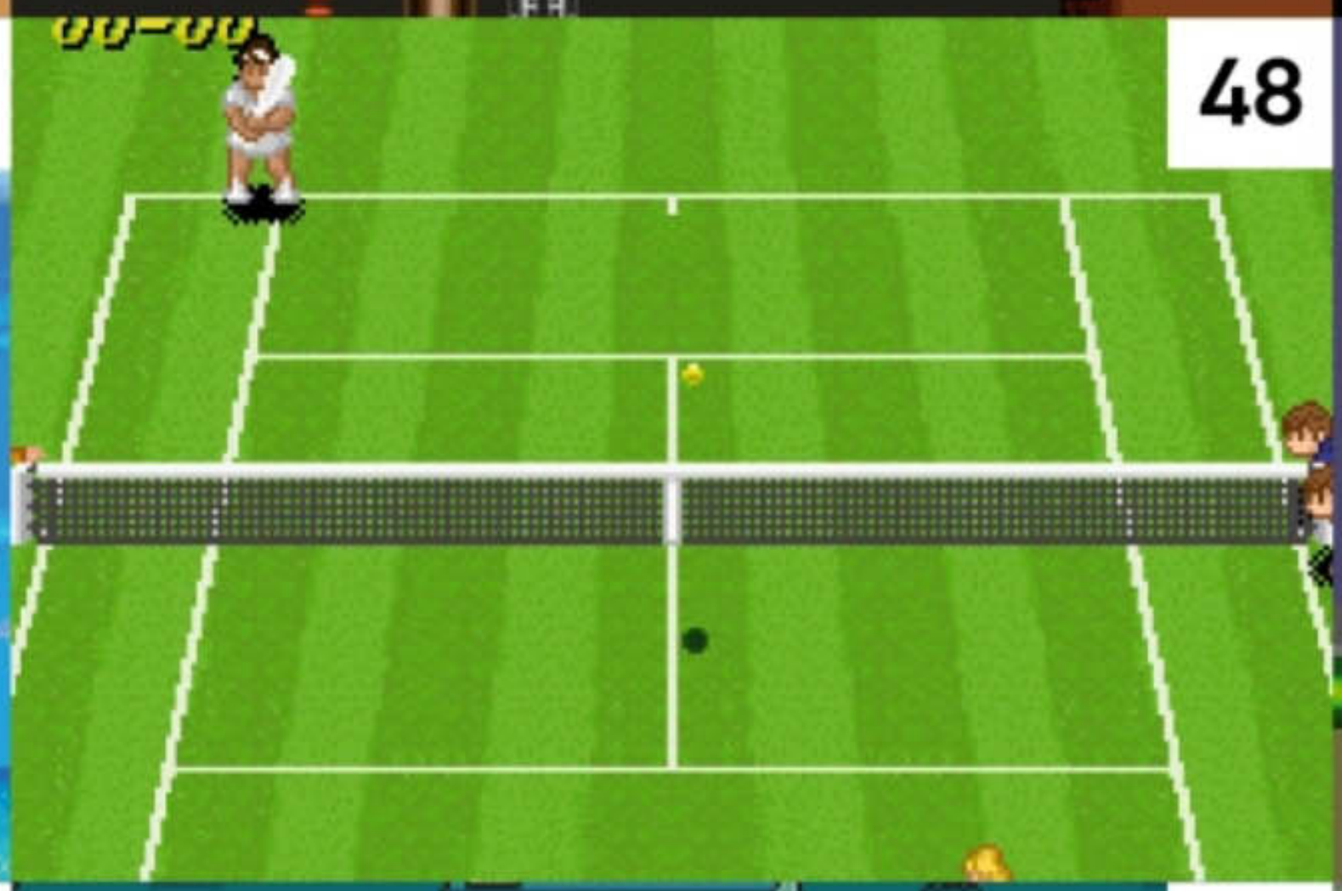

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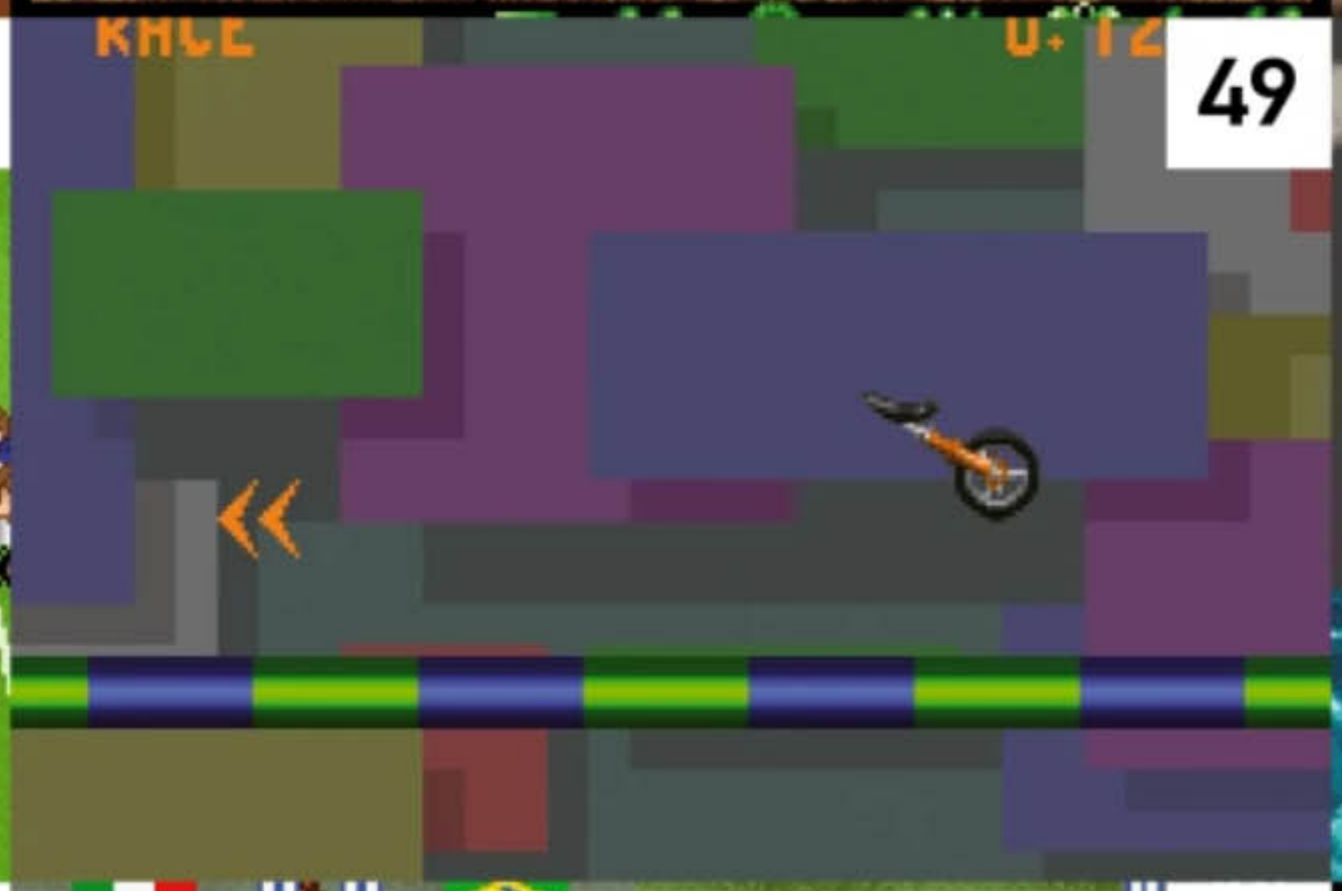

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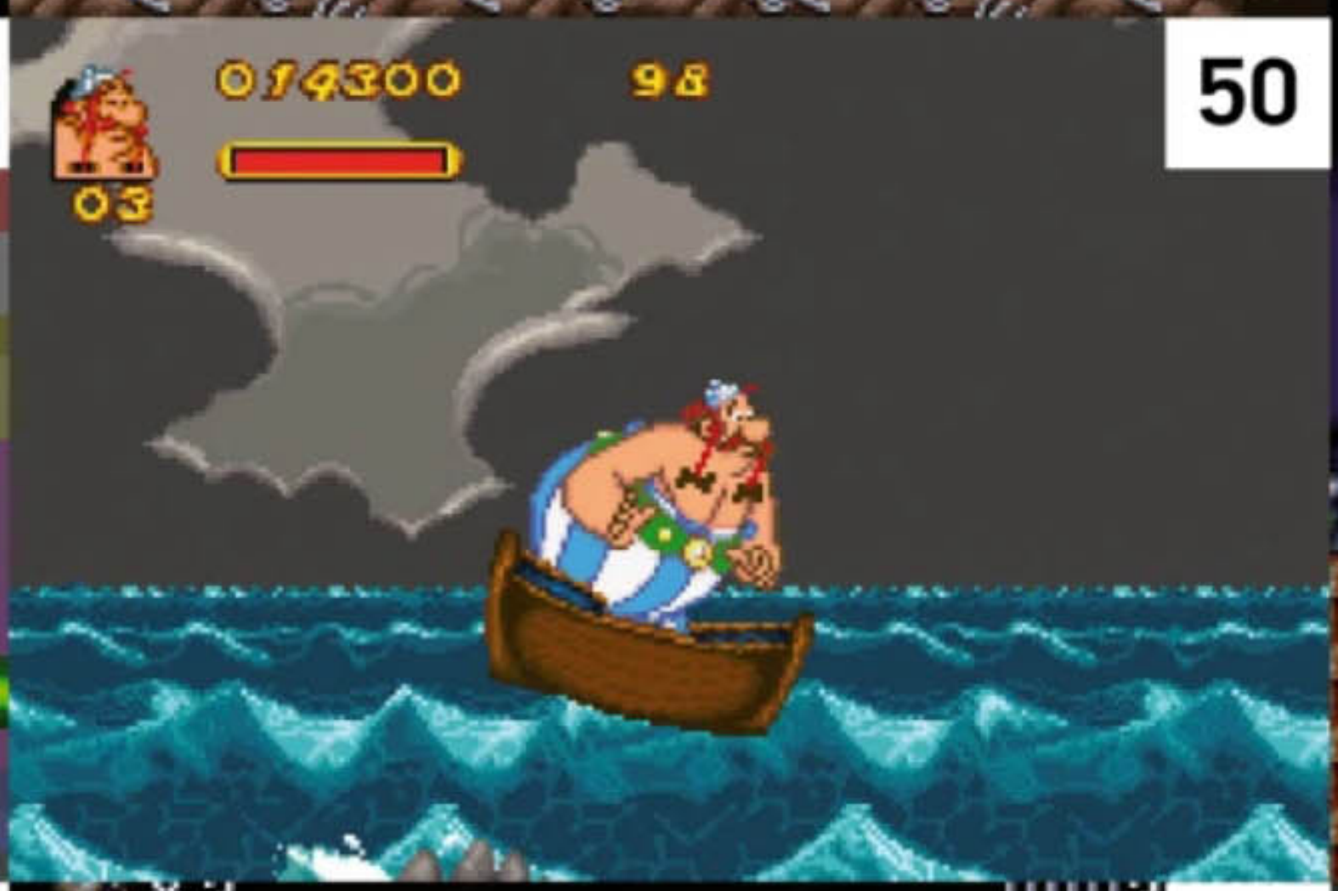

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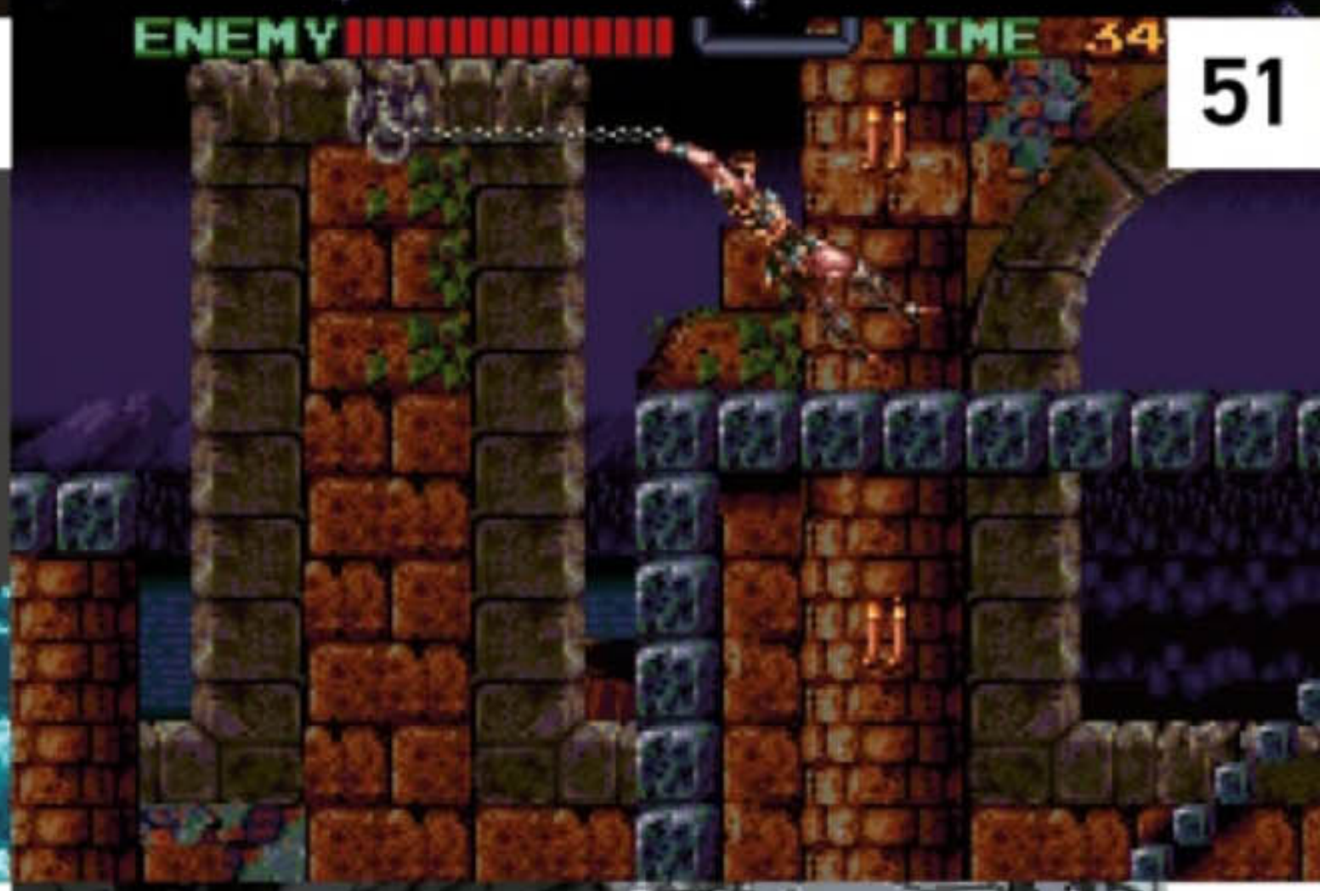

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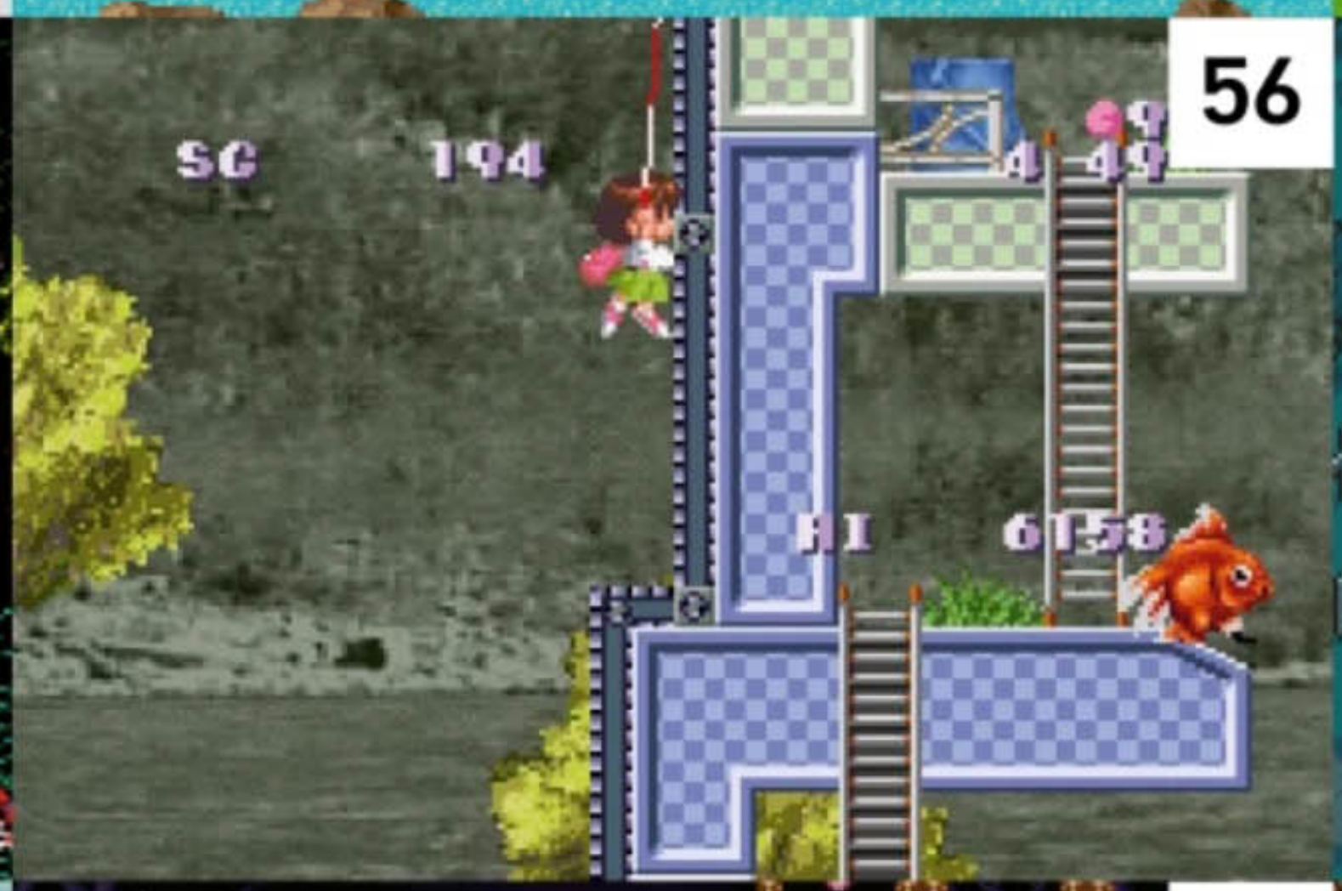

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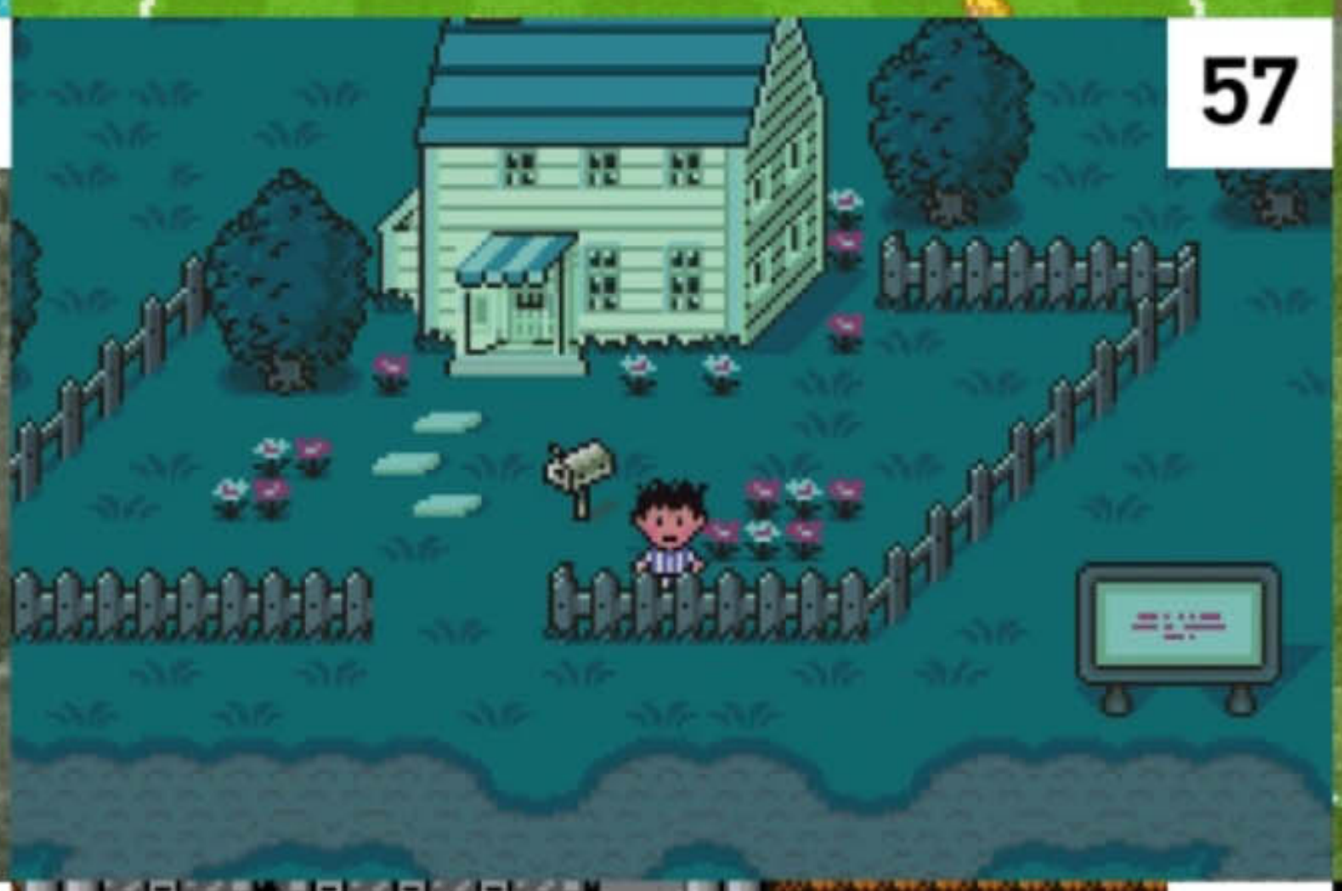

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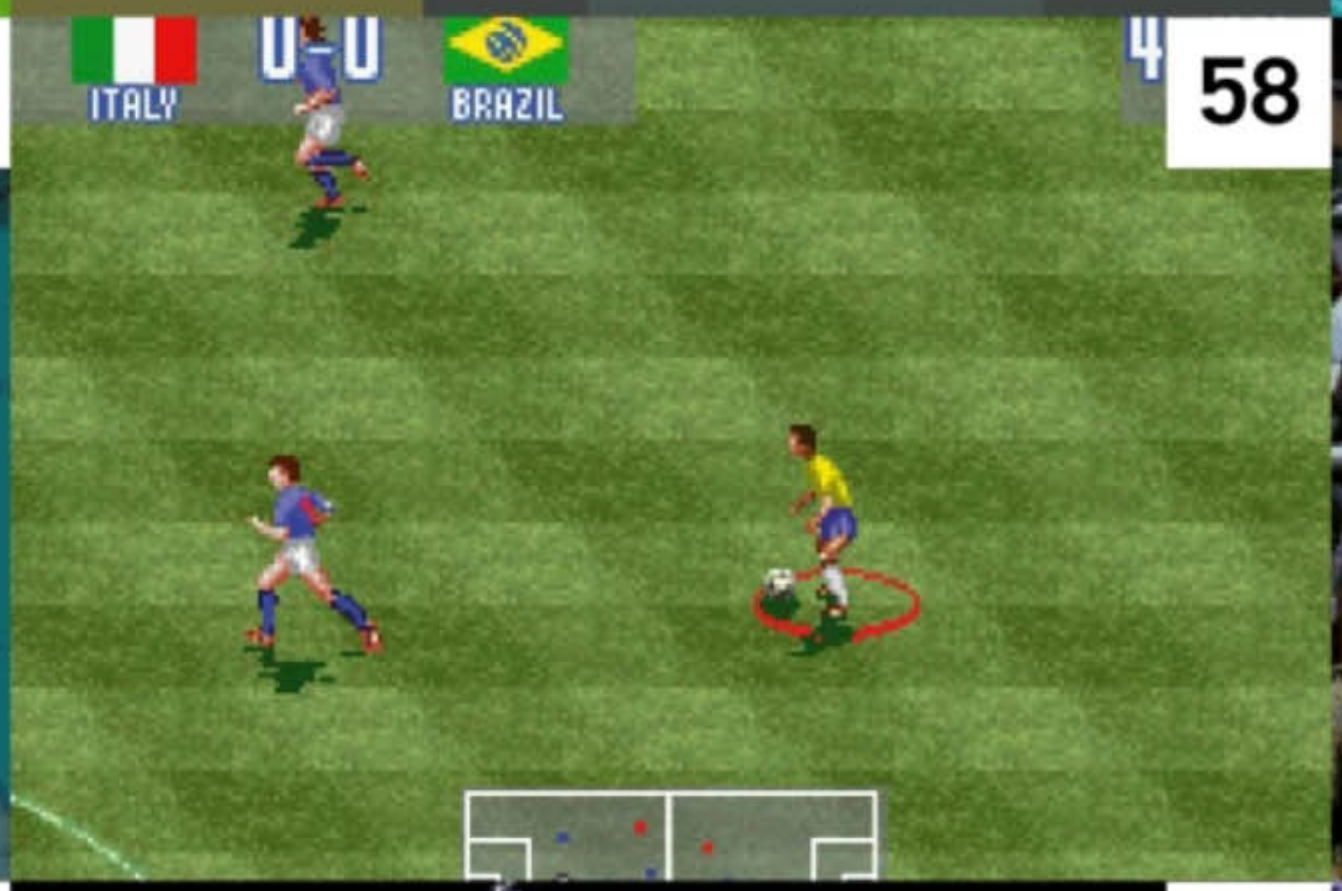
ITALY
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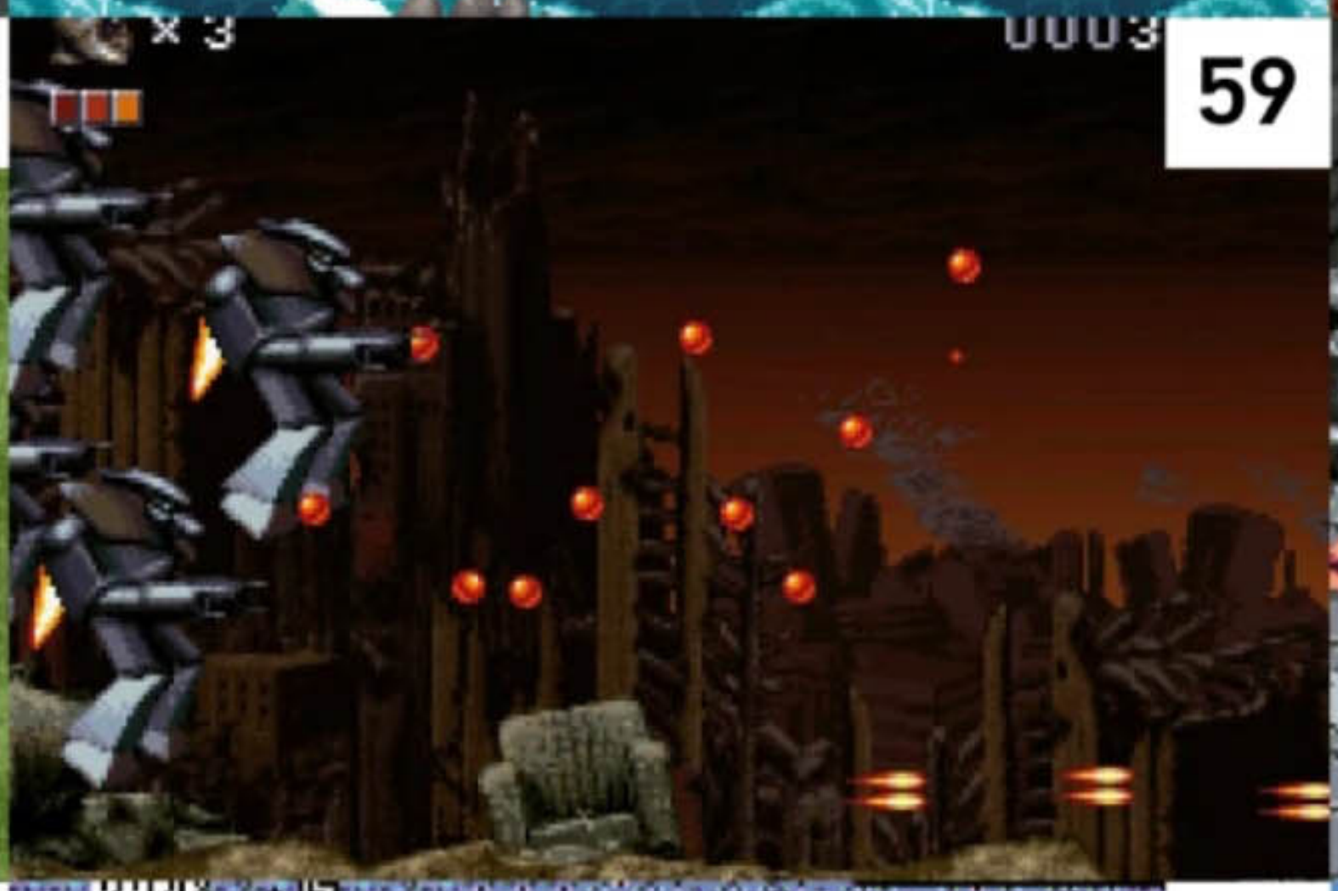

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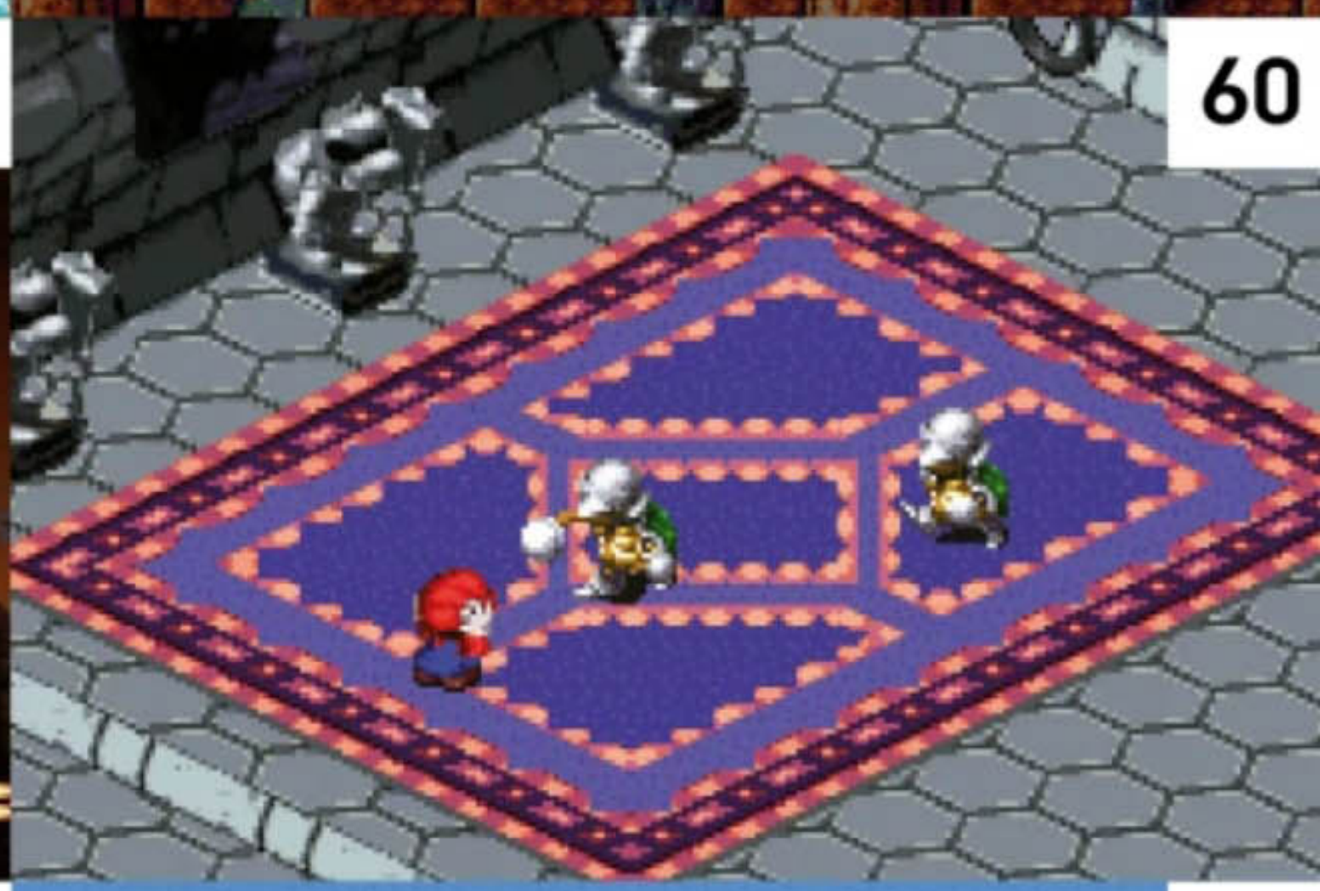

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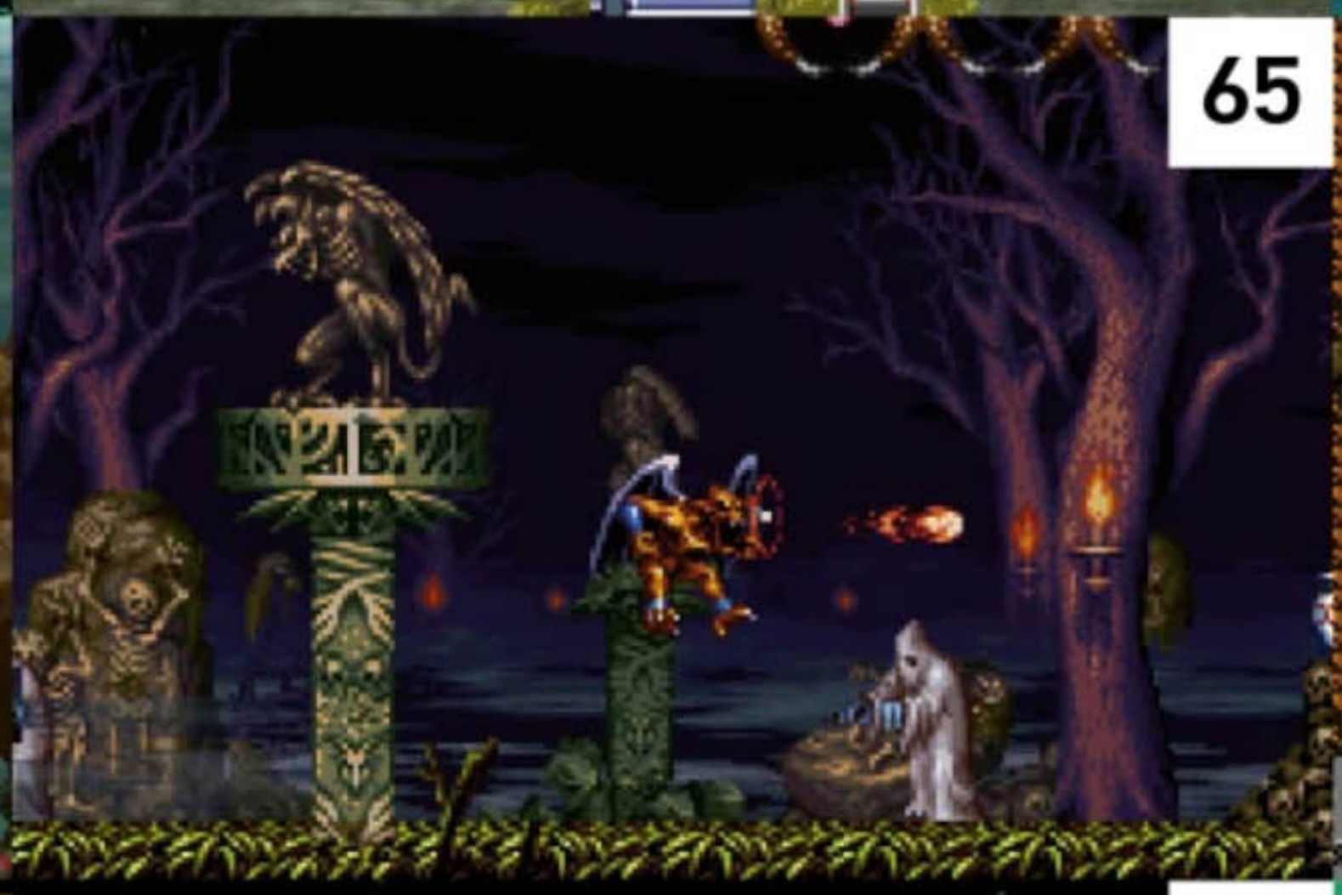

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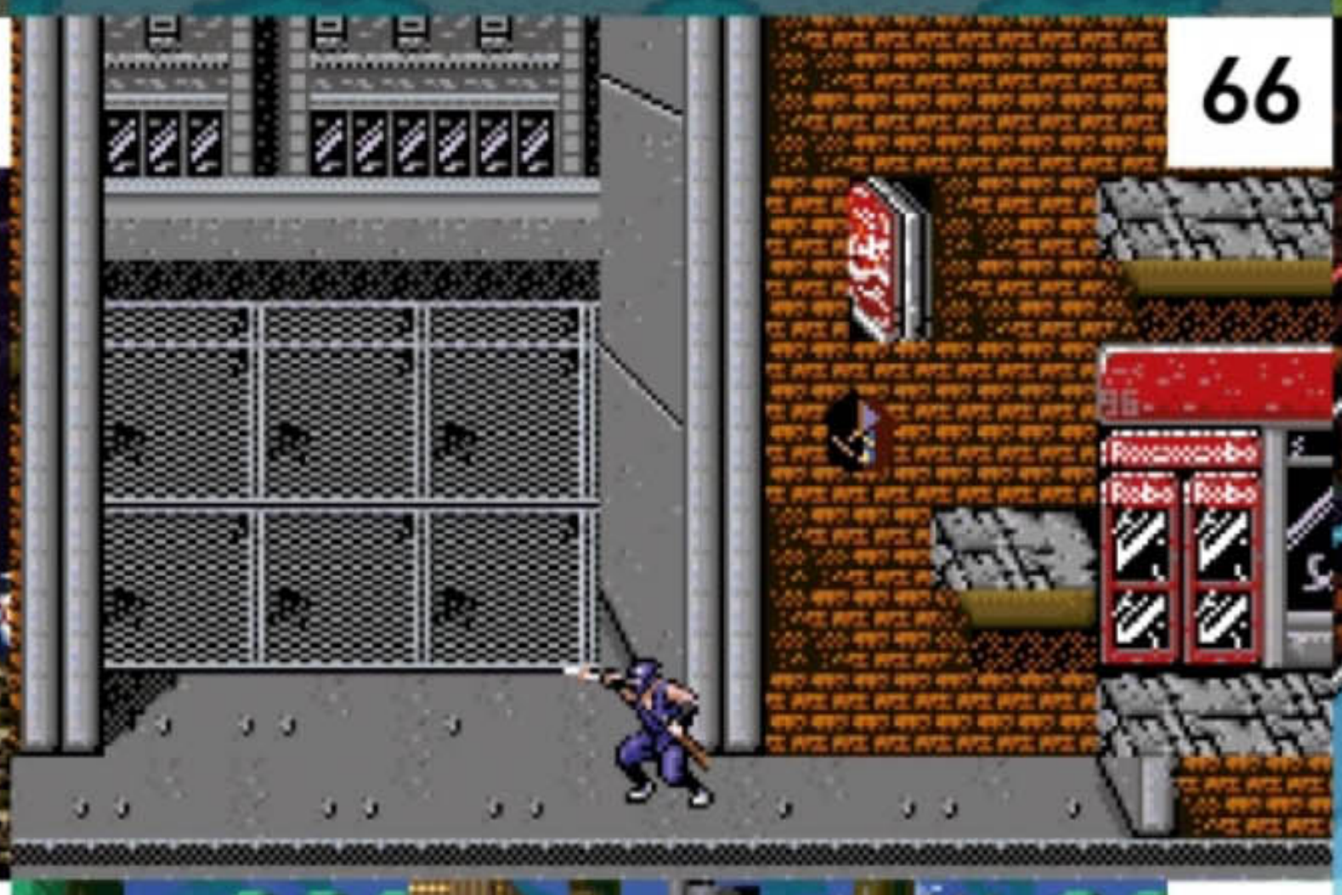

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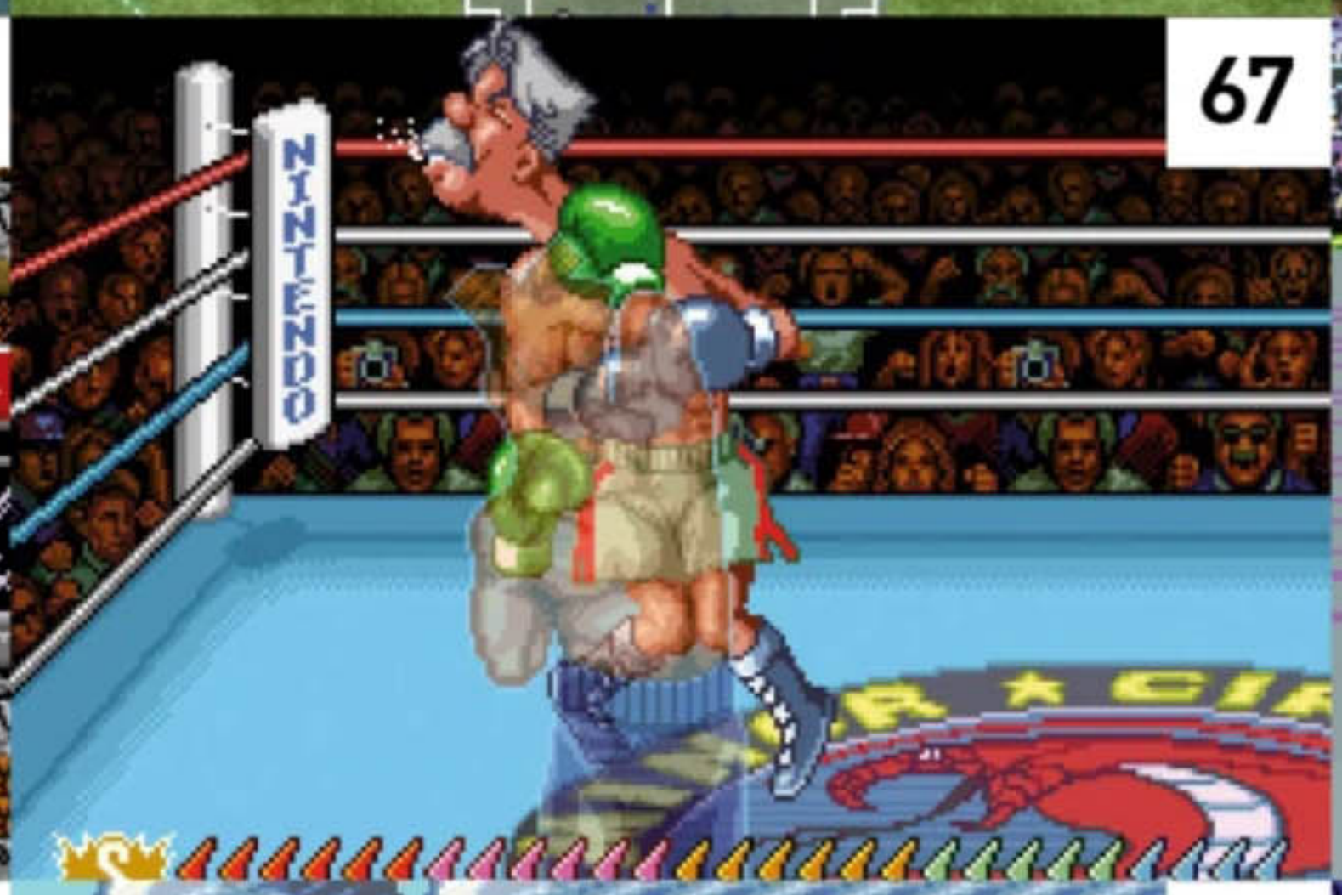

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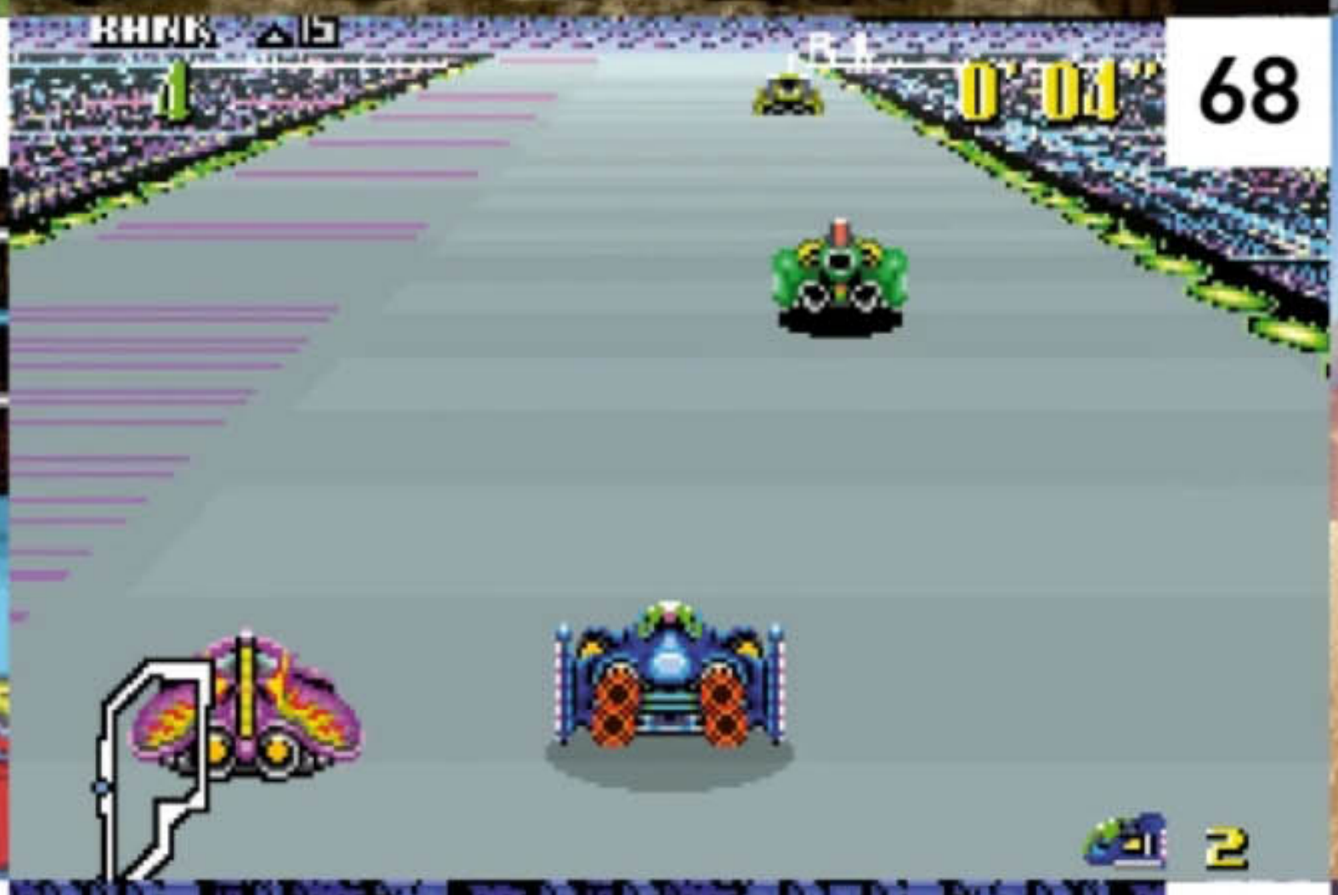

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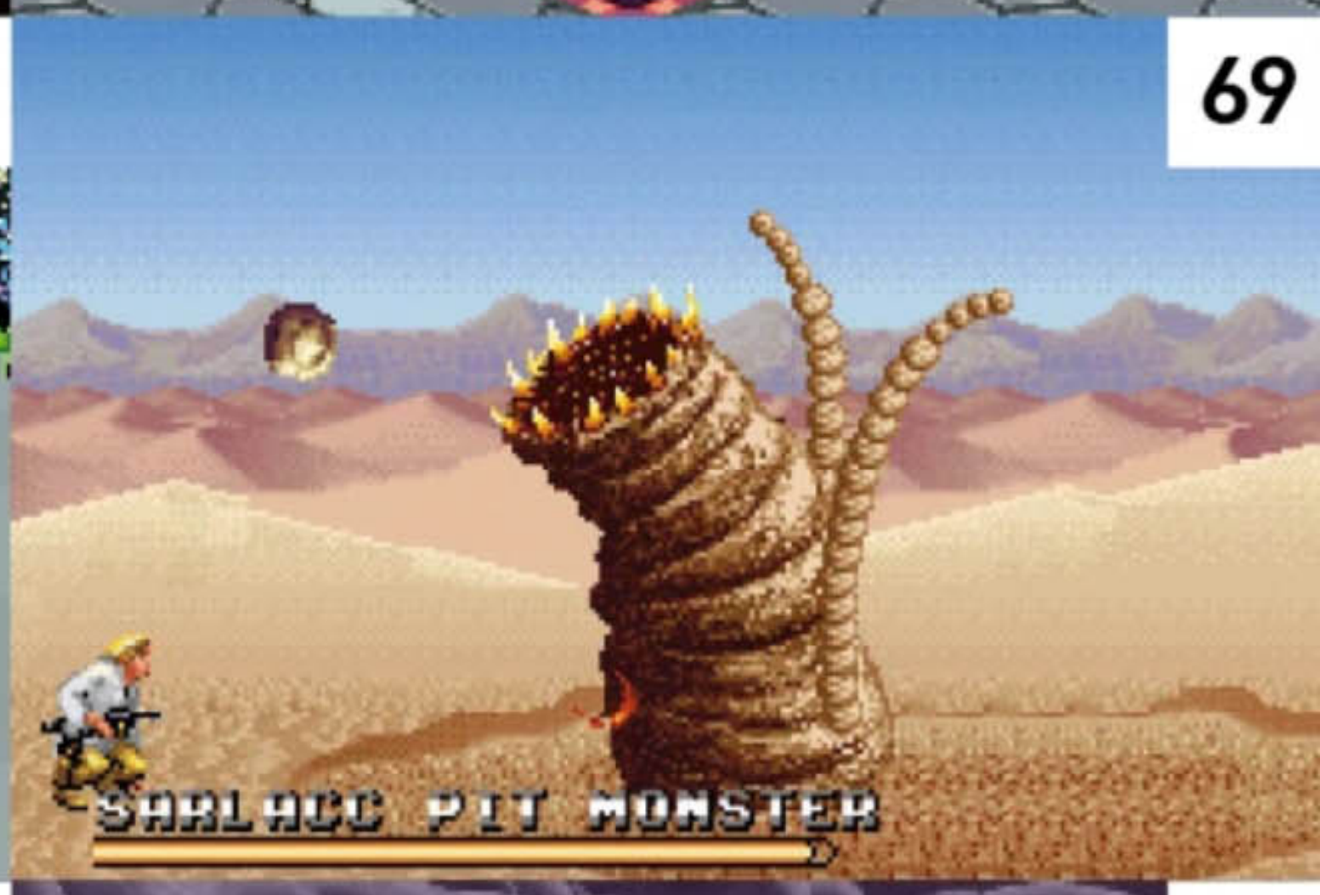
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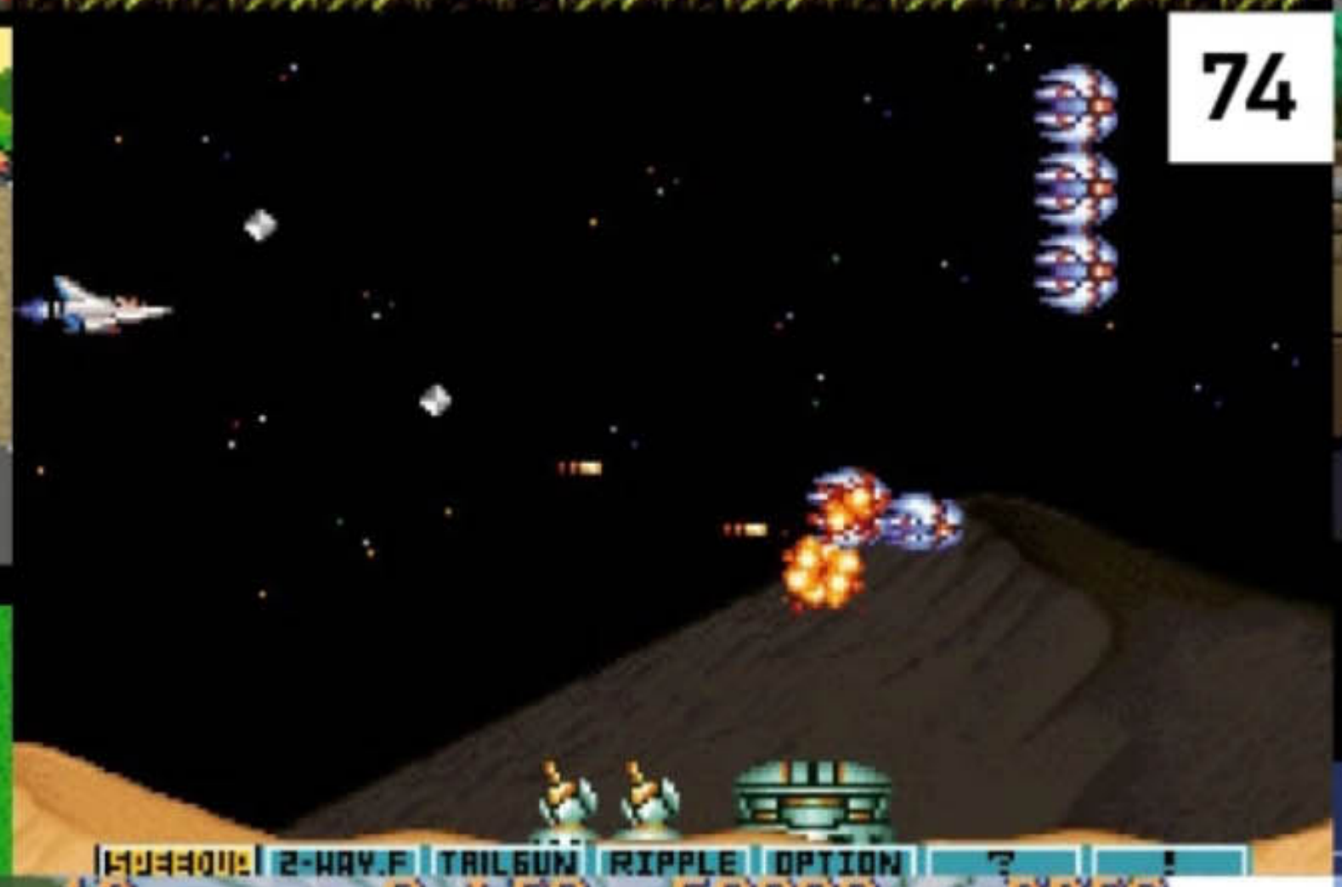

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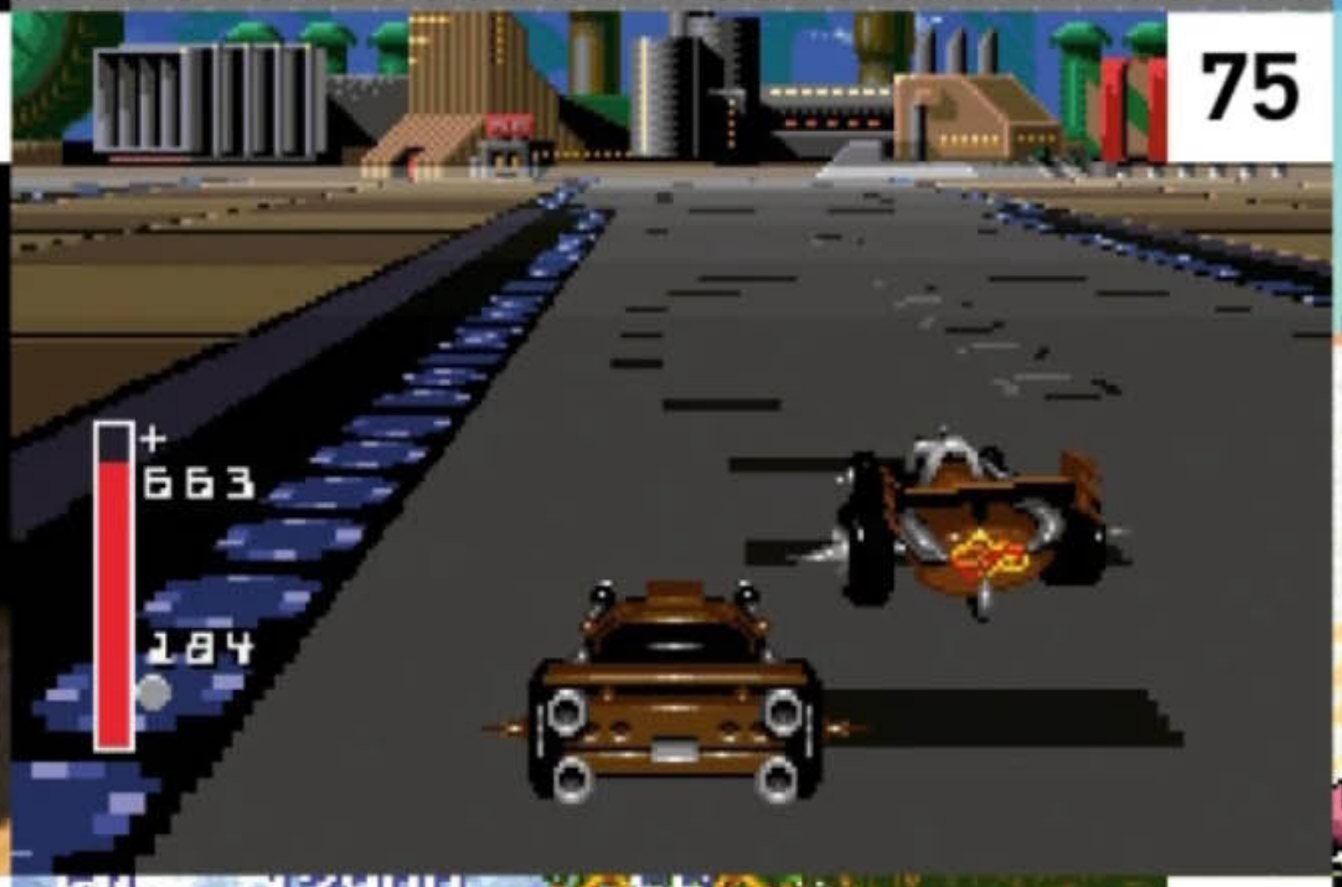

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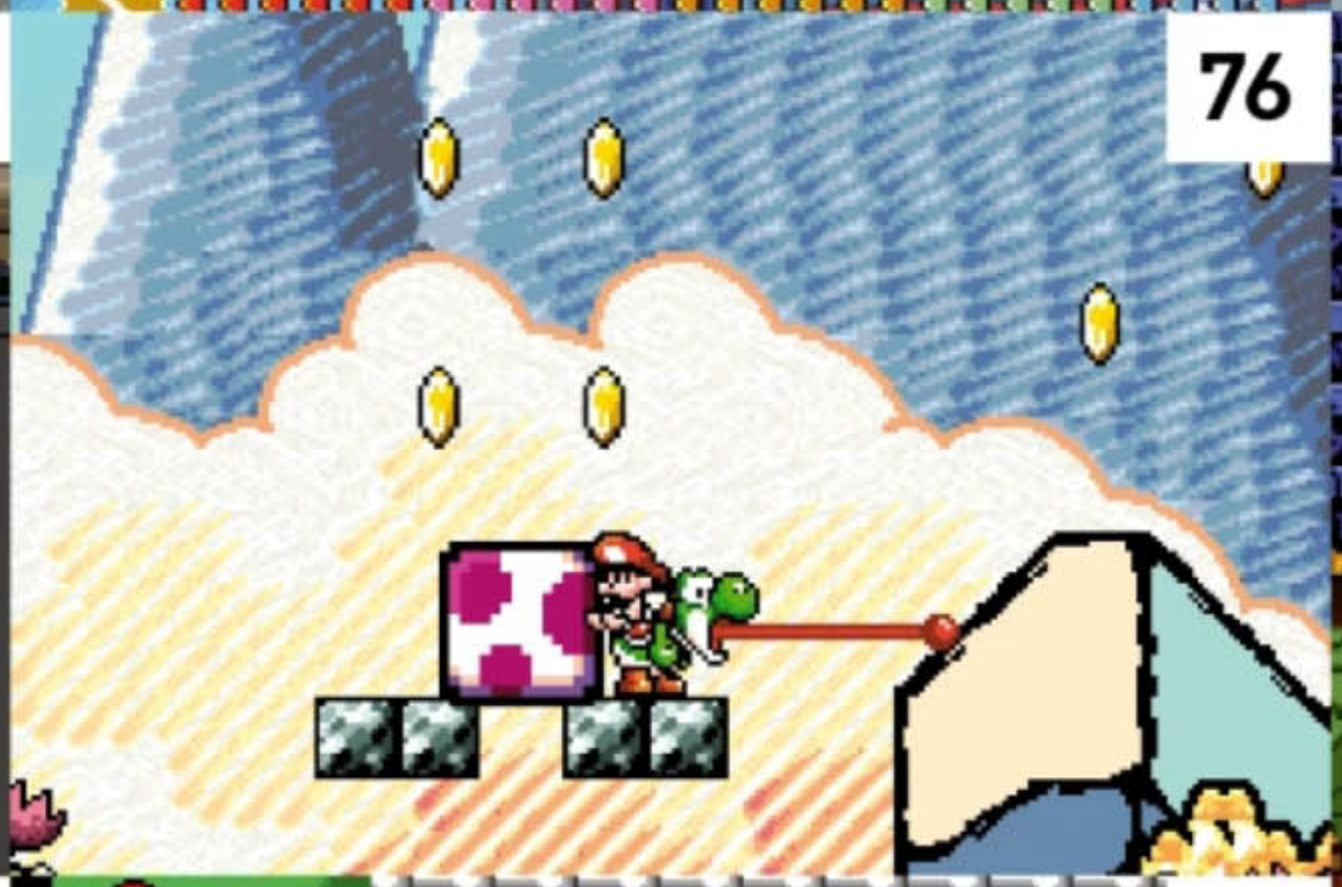

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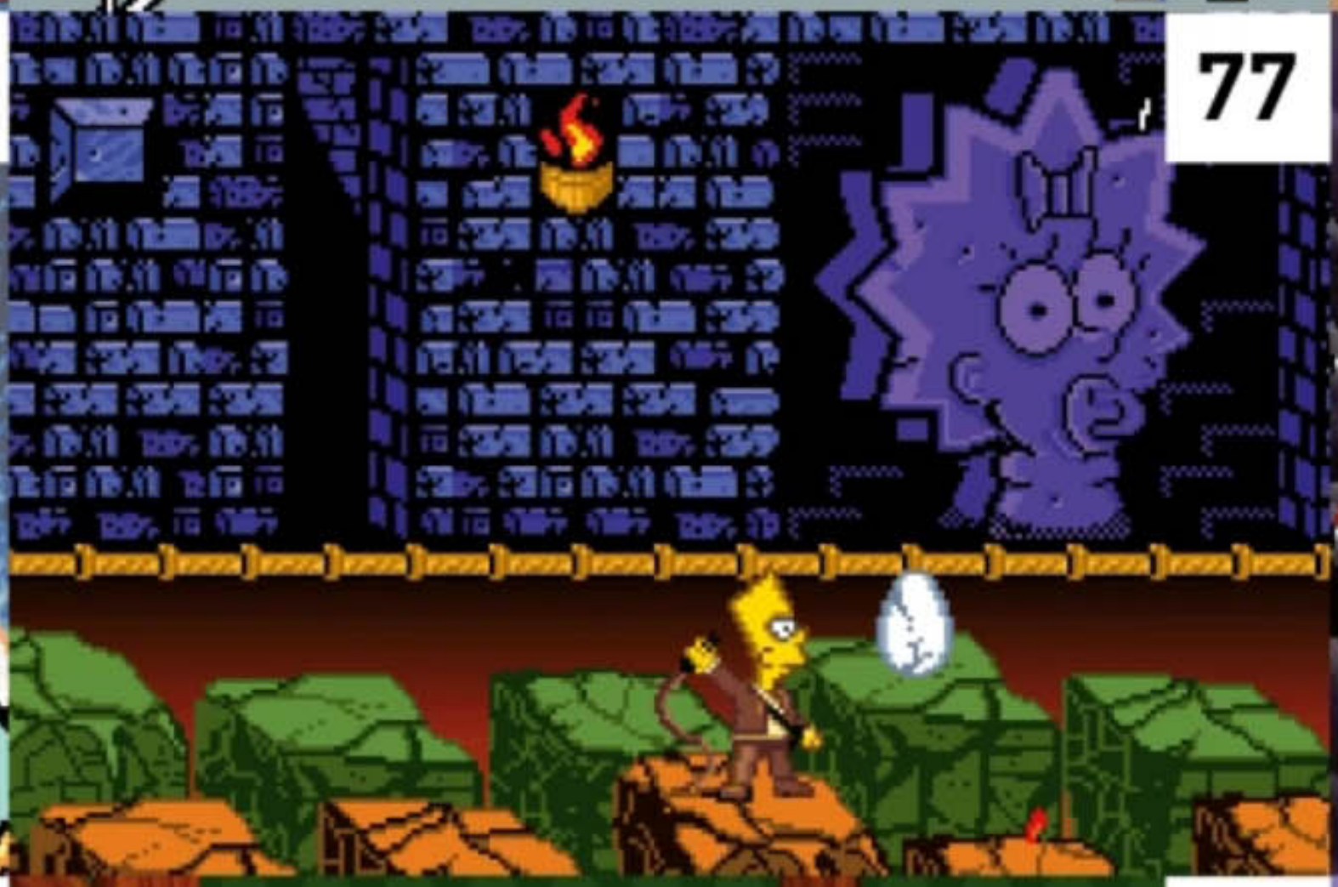

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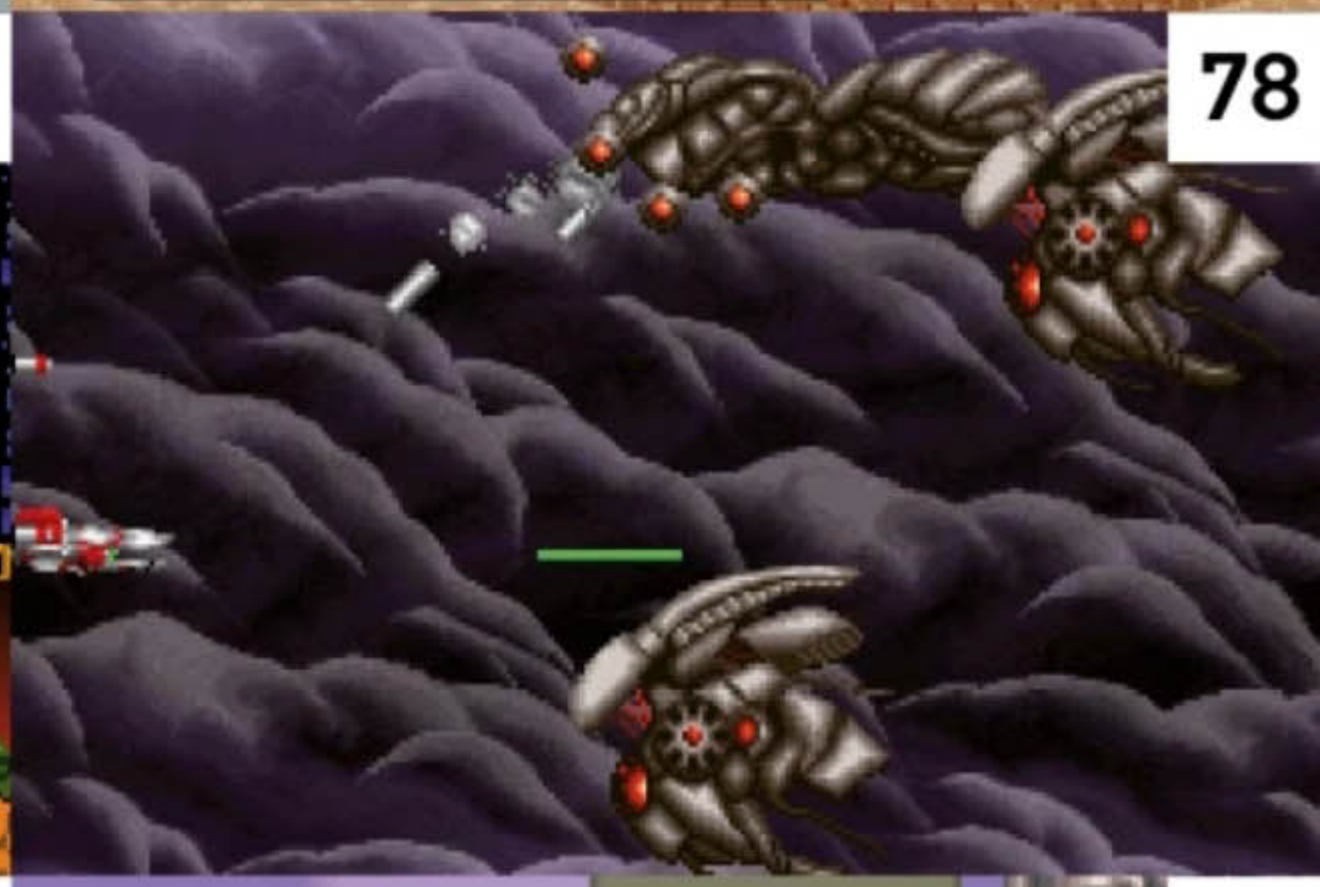

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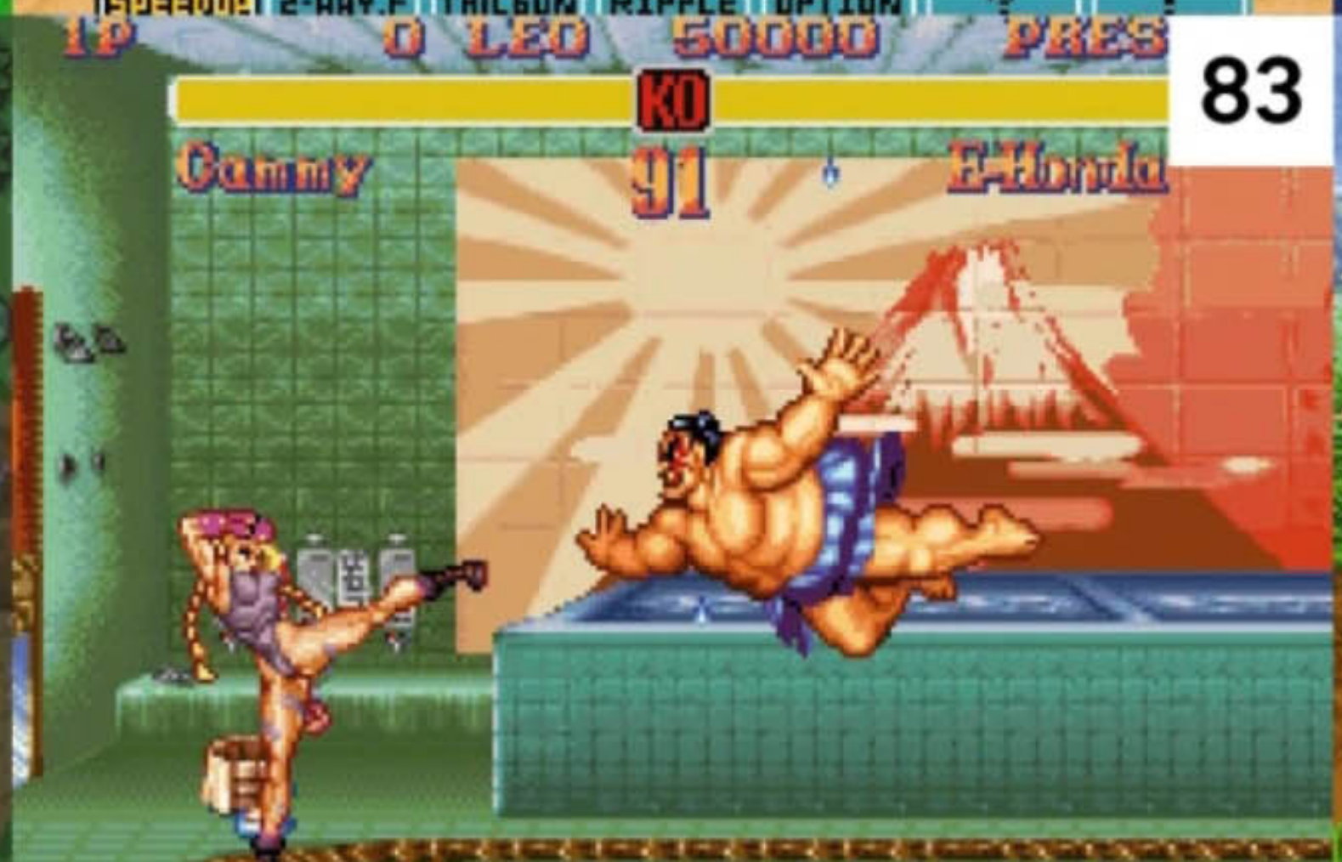

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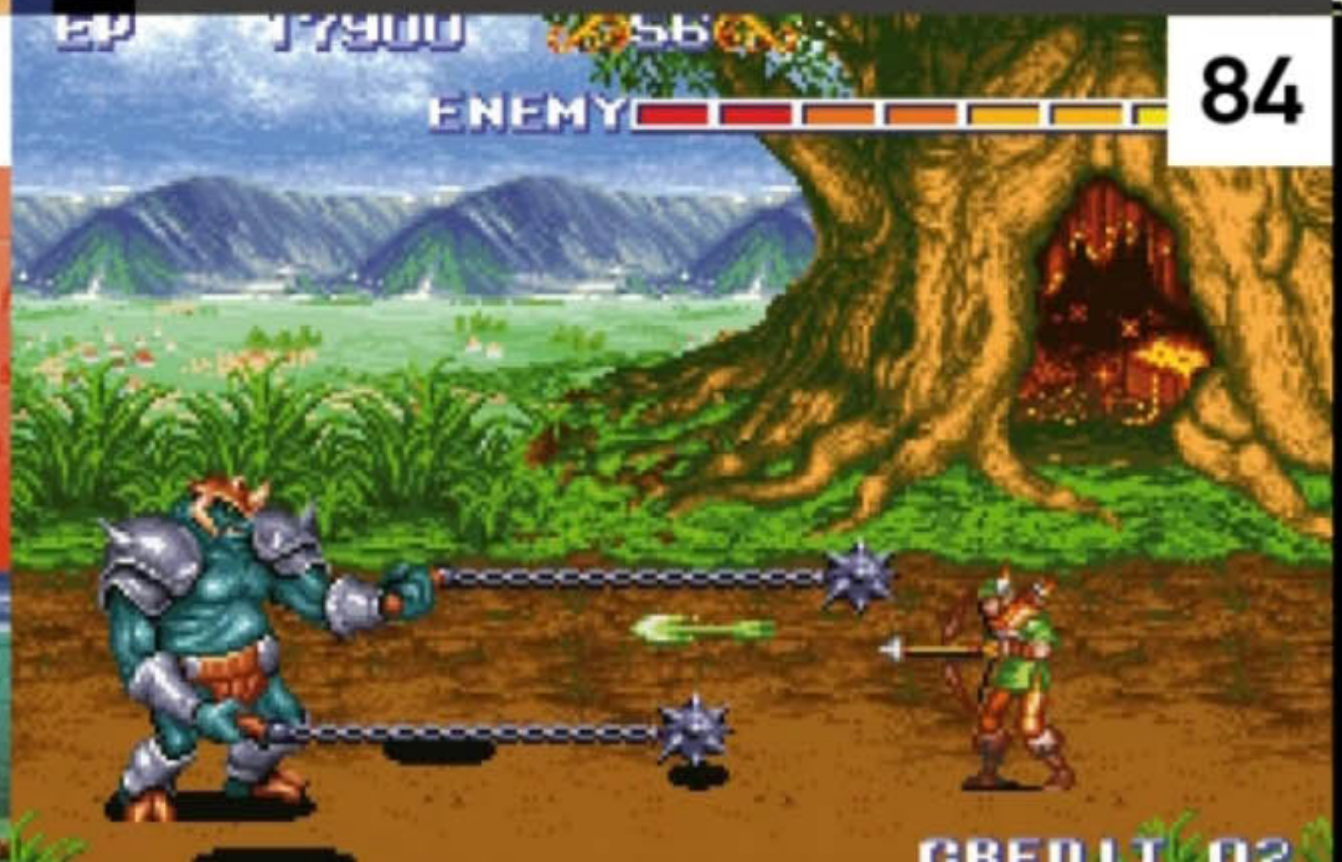

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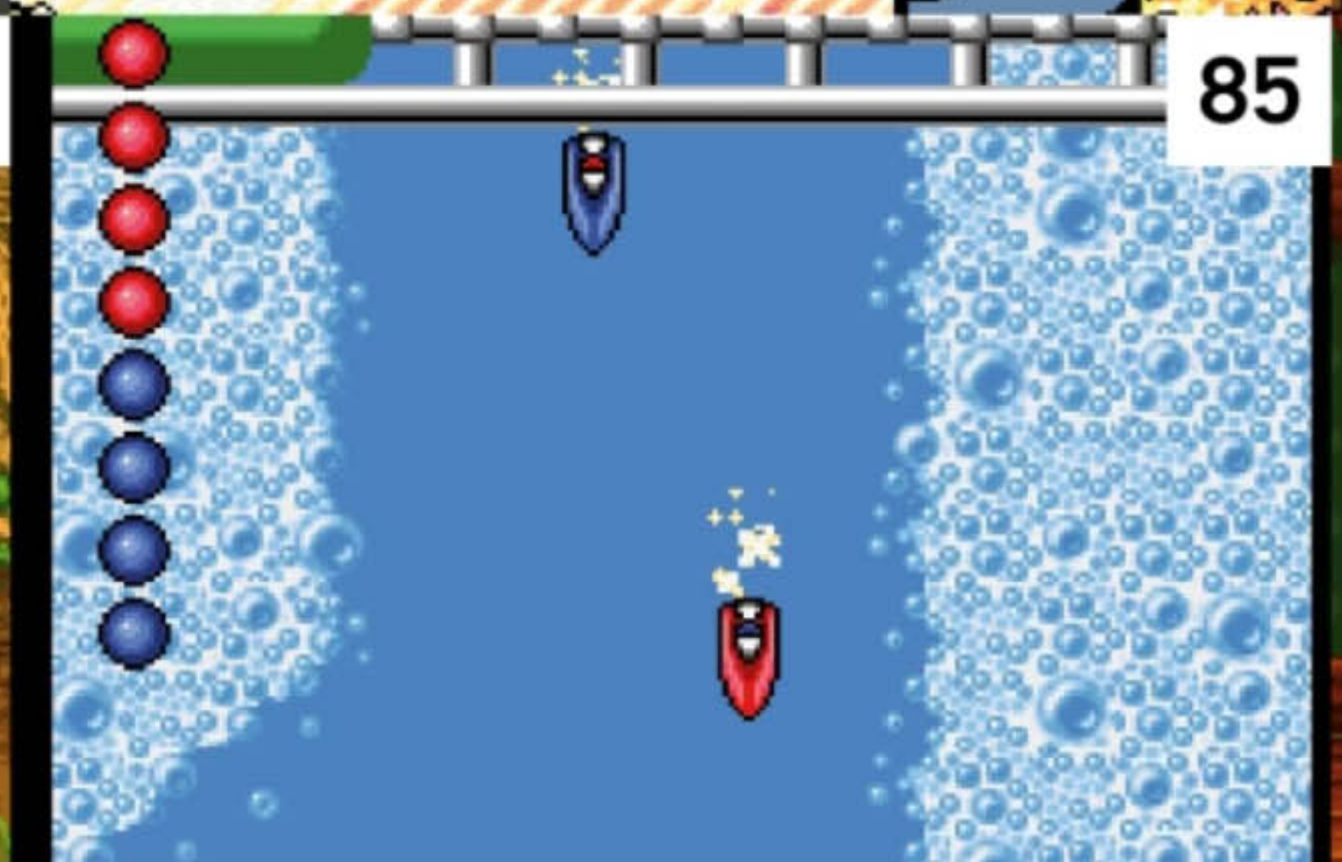

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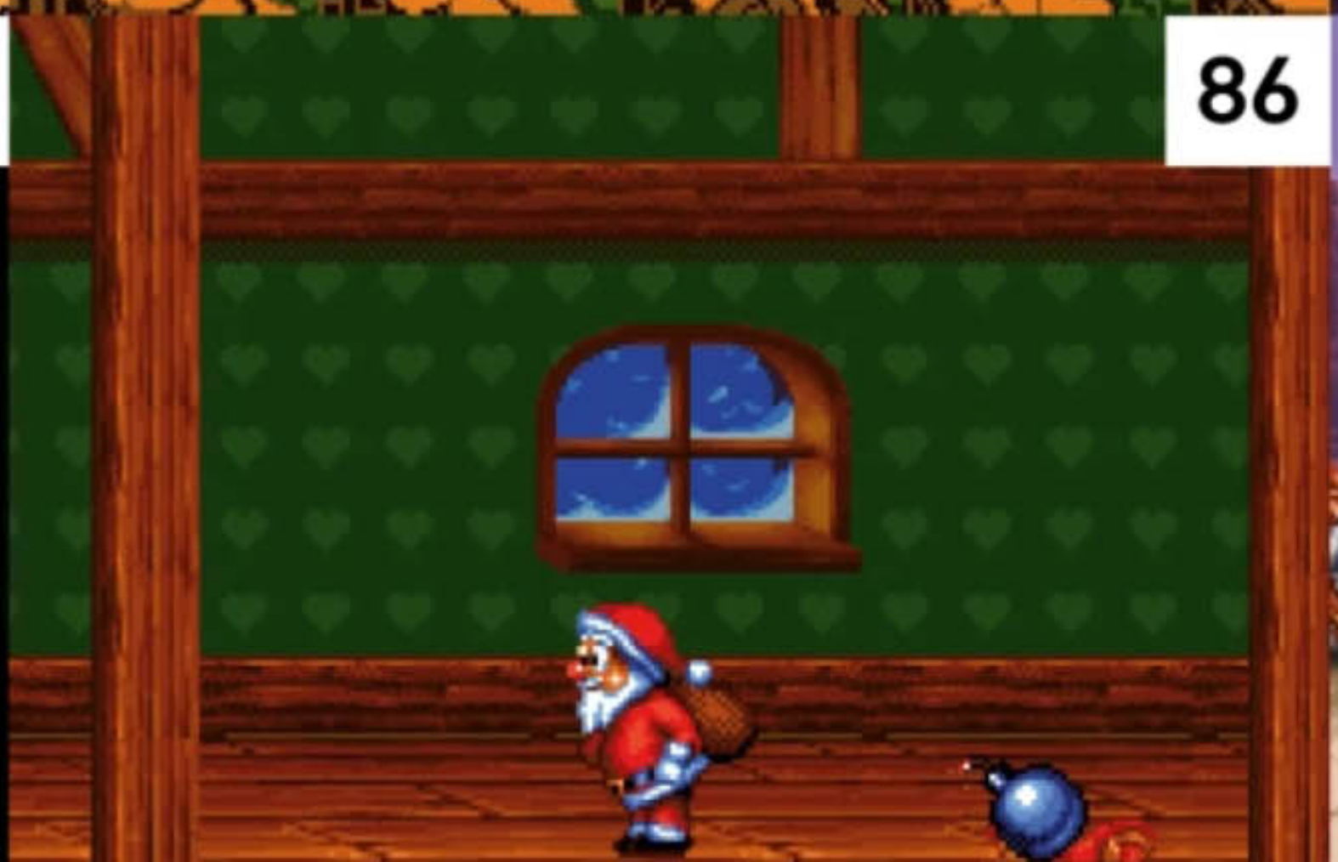

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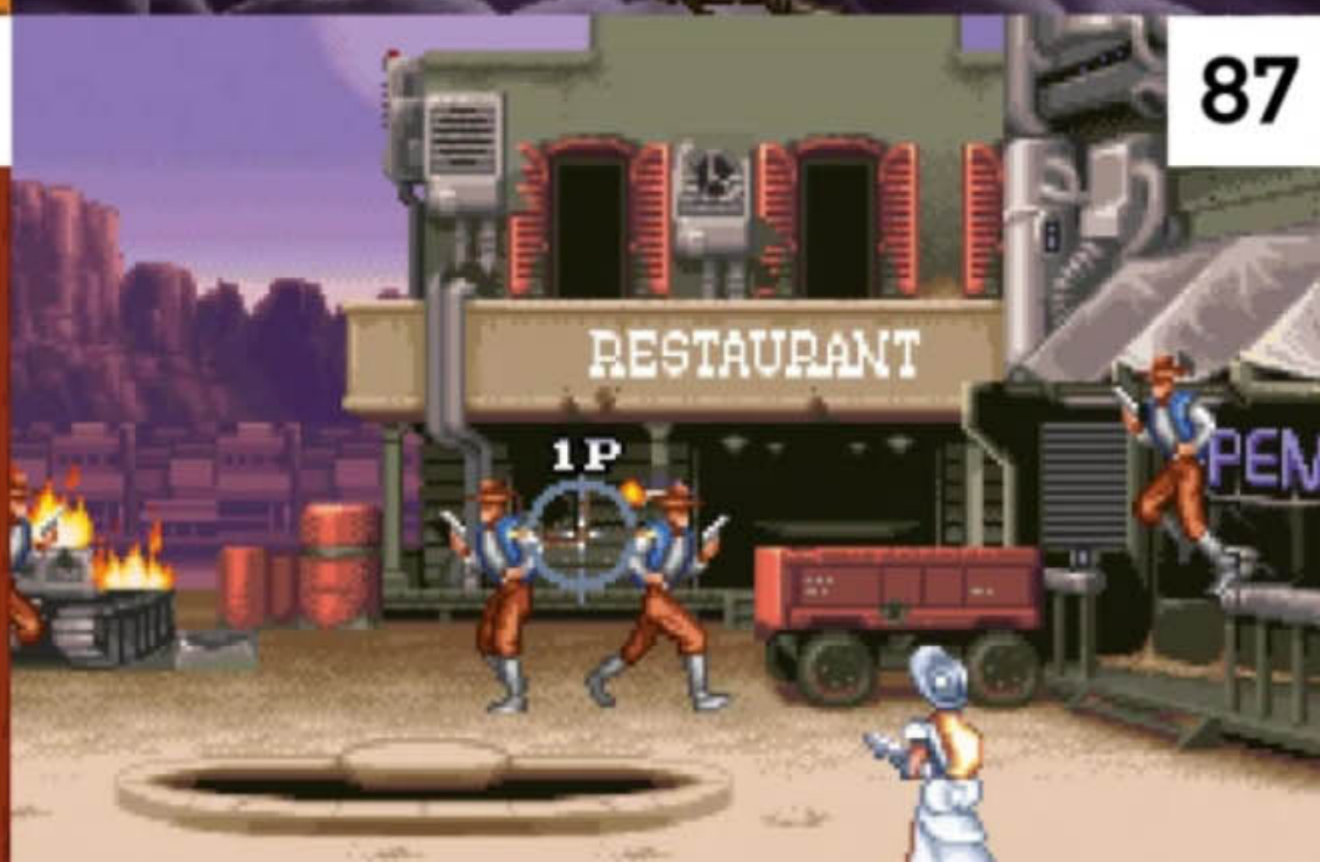
RESTAURANT
1P

STREET FIGHTER II TURBO

RETURN OF THE KING

Street Fighter II Turbo
HYPER FIGHTING

- **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES

HISTORY

I don't exactly have a lot of love for Capcom's seminal brawler. Don't get me wrong. I'm fully aware of its historical importance and realise that plenty of people still play it on a regular basis but after witnessing the glorious choreography of *Street Fighter 3: Third Strike,* its older peer really appeared to have nothing new to offer. How wrong I was…

Thanks to Capcom, and more importantly, Xbox Live arcade, I've been able to re-discover the joy of *Street Fighter II*, or more specifically, *Street Fighter II' Hyper Fighting* (or *Turbo* as it's known to us Brits). While the original *Street Fighter II* remains a slow, turgid experience (sorry guys, but it's true) *Turbo* gives the game a much-needed boost of speed and ensures that bouts are always satisfying to play. New costumes, extra moves and re-designed backdrops were just a few of the additions that Capcom included and I still have the cool metal tin that it was lovingly packaged in.

While later titles have presented us with more character choices than ever, ridiculous specials and the beauty that is parrying, there's still something immensely satisfying about a no-nonsense round of *Turbo*. There's no need to worry about pulling off double fireball motions, you won't moan over the cheapness of *Third Strike's* Chun-Li and Ken, you can just concentrate on mastering the good old fashioned art of beating the hell out of each other. Sure the character models look a little old-fashioned now and the animation has lost a lot of its slickness over the years, but even with these niggles (and that's all they really are) *Turbo's* gameplay remains resoundingly solid.

While it's no longer my 2D fighter of choice (that honour goes to the excellent digital port of *Street Fighter III: Third Strike*, I still enjoy the odd bout of fisticuffs on Capcom's excellent brawler whenever I have my SNES out (which is often). It remains one of the slickest 16-bit arcade conversions around, and time has done nothing to diminish that fact.

KO
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RYU

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
A LINK TO THE PAST

◆

Refreshing a series for a new generation is tough, especially when it's a Zelda title. Nick Thorpe speaks to Takashi Tezuka and Kensuke Tanabe about the hard work that went into this action-RPG classic…

◆

When you look back at the history of the series, *The Legend Of Zelda* occupies a funny space in Nintendo's planning processes. If a *Zelda* game arrives in time for a console launch, it's because the game was heavily delayed on the previous generation of hardware. Yet *Zelda* is never overlooked when a new Nintendo console is being planned – in fact, it's often one of the very first things considered for a new machine. Our first look at *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker* came before the GameCube had hit the shelves, but the game launched over a year into the life of the machine. A demo of what would eventually become *The Legend Of Zelda: The Ocarina Of Time* was shown to attendees of Nintendo's Shoshinkai 1995 expo, but the game didn't materialise until 1998. But the game that started this tradition was *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*, the game that marked Link's move off of 8-bit platforms.

In planning the launch of the 16-bit SNES platform, Nintendo identified two basic software needs: new properties that could demonstrate the power of the new hardware, and more of what had made the NES successful. For the former category, Nintendo chose racing and flight games that would be impossible to achieve on rival consoles, and delivered a one-two punch of *F-Zero* and *Pilotwings* in November and December 1990. For the latter, Nintendo chose to immediately develop follow-ups to its most popular NES properties – the *Super Mario Bros.* and *The Legend Of Zelda* series.

HYRULE'S HEROES

The A Link To The Past developers we spoke to

TAKASHI TEZUKA

Director

KENSUKE TANABE

Script Writer

However, creating a new *Zelda* was a bit more difficult than creating another *Mario* game – *Mario* games were all very similar, but *The Legend Of Zelda* and *Zelda II: Link's Adventure* were very different games. This left the Nintendo EAD team with some big decisions to make regarding its approach to the new game. "In *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link*, we wanted to include sword combat with a variety of different moves into the gameplay, and so decided the project would use a side-scrolling view that made use of our experience from *Super Mario* games," explains Takashi Tezuka, a veteran Nintendo developer who served as director for both *The Legend Of Zelda* and *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*. "We made two *Zelda* games for the NES, both making the most of that hardware. But then with the next *Zelda* for the SNES, we were able to add even more new things to the gameplay."

The final decision on which structure to use was driven by the concept of the game, according to Tezuka. "When we were starting the project, we experimented to see if it was possible to include a multi-world structure into the game. Our plan was that events in the hub world would have an effect on the other, overlapping worlds," he explains. "In the end, we decided it would be best for us, the developers, as well as for players to have this as two worlds; one light, one dark. We felt the best way to represent this overlap of light and dark, and to represent the changes between them, was to use the same slanted top-down view used in the original *The Legend Of Zelda* game."

It's rare for a company to discard the major changes made to a sequel, but it would prove to be a wise decision. Quite apart from the fact that *Zelda II* has become known as one of the weaker games in the series as time has passed, there was still a lot that Nintendo could change and improve in going back to the old top-down format. Even very basic things were overhauled, such as the way Link moved around the environment – for the first time, he was able to move diagonally as well as in the four cardinal directions. Rather than using a simple thrust, Link would actually swing his sword in a more realistic arc.

According to a 1992 Famitsu interview with Shigeru Miyamoto, this combination of new features actually gave way to another new feature. With the addition of

LINK'S ARSENAL

A hero can't get the job done without the right tools…

BOW & ARROW
■ A good ranged weapon, although you have a limited supply of arrows.

BOOMERANG
■ This doesn't just hurt enemies, it retrieves far-off items too.

HOOKSHOT
■ This item can pull Link across dangerous gaps, or grab baddies.

BOMB
■ Does what it says on the tin – place it and run away!

ETHER MEDALLION
■ An enormous blast of lightning fries flying enemies and stuns the rest.

QUAKE MEDALLION
■ A mighty tremor reduces grounded enemies to either nothing or slime.

LAMP
■ Useful for lighting up the game's many dark rooms by igniting torches.

MAGIC HAMMER
■ This versatile tool and weapon is useful against frozen enemies.

CANE OF SOMARIA
■ This is used to instantly create blocks – good for weights and shielding.

CANE OF BYRNA
■ This awesome item shields Link and hurts enemies in the process!

MAGIC CAPE
■ This fashionable item makes Link both invisible and invincible.

MAGIC MIRROR
■ An important item, as it's Link's path between the Light and Dark Worlds

LINK SHRINKS

The only port of Link's 16-bit adventure received some major upgrades…

GAME BOY ADVANCE
THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA
A LINK TO THE PAST
Four Swords
Nintendo

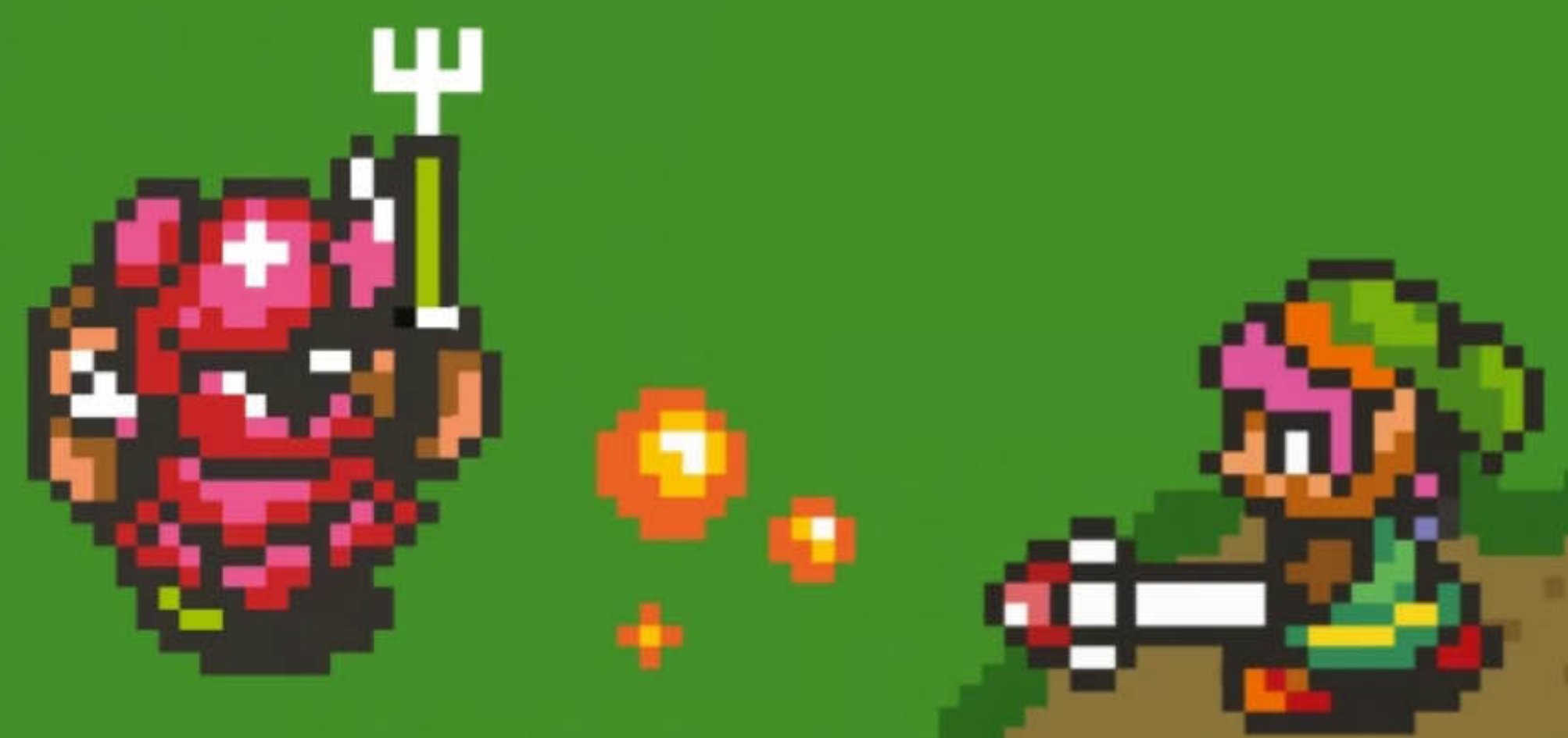
The prospect of SNES-quality games on the Game Boy Advance was one that intrigued gamers around the world, and Nintendo set about making sure that a number of them would be available for dedicated fans, with *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* being one of the earlier examples. The game ran at the slightly lower screen resolution of 240x160 (as opposed to 256x224), but received slightly more accurate translation and some minor bug fixes.

However, the game also received a major new mode in the form of the co-operative game *Four Swords*, which allowed up to four players to quest together as various coloured Links using the GBA's Link Cable. If you finished that quest, it was then possible to play through a new single-player dungeon as a reward, facing numerous stronger versions of the Dark World bosses before coming face to face with a surprising final enemy.

Not only did the GBA game sell an impressive 1.8 million units, but *Four Swords* left its own legacy, spawning the dedicated multiplayer GameCube sequel *The Legend Of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures* and the 3DS game *The Legend Of Zelda: Tri-Force Heroes*. *Four Swords* was also rereleased as a limited anniversary edition downloadable game for the Nintendo DSi and 3DS handhelds.

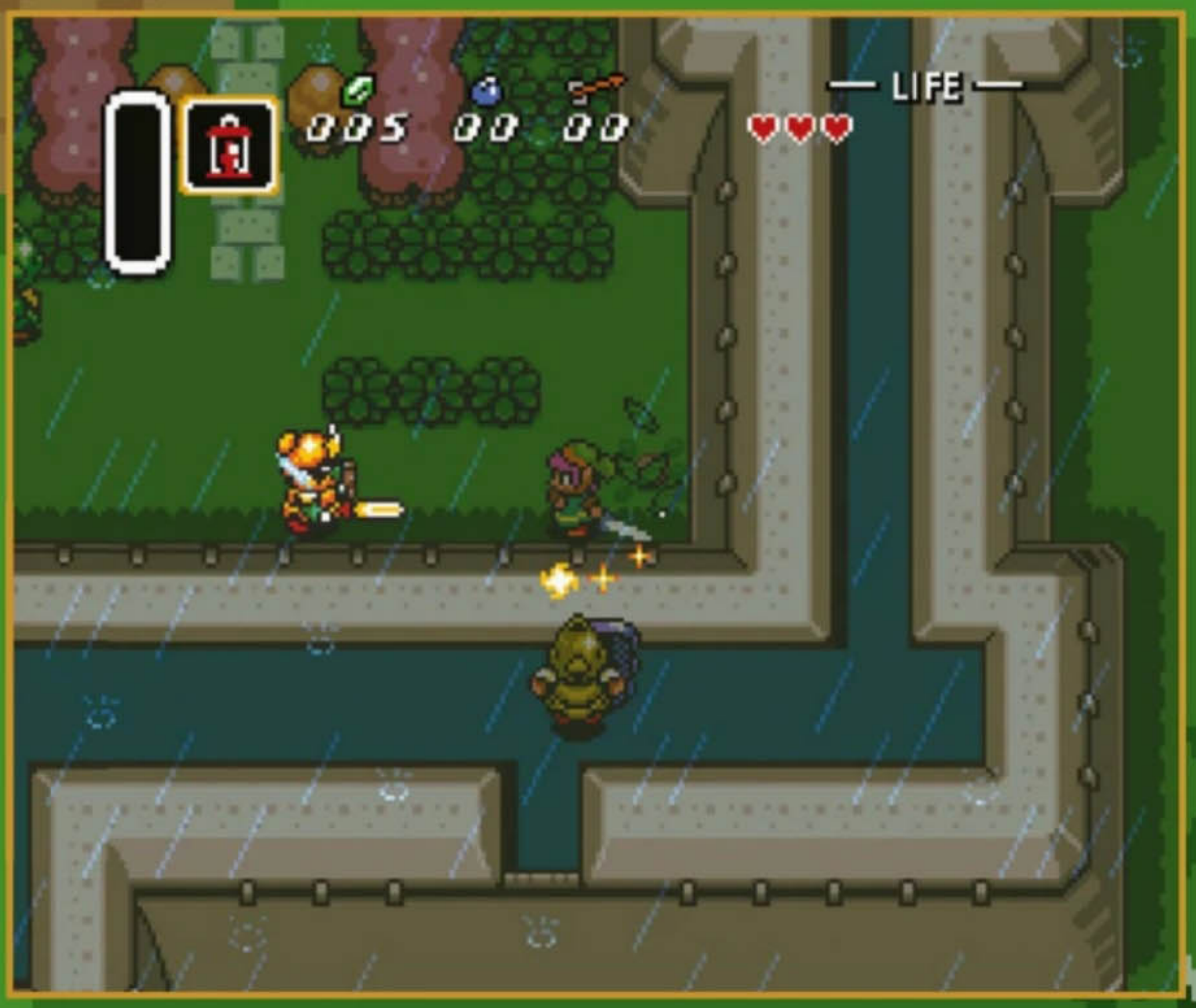
▶ diagonal movement, the Nintendo EAD team had made the logical assumption that Link should be able to attack diagonally, too. However, in practice it actually made the controls feel somewhat worse, and Link was once again saddled with the ability to move in eight directions but face only four. Undeterred, the team found a way to add a multi-directional attack in the form of a spin attack, activated by holding the sword button down for a couple of seconds. This elegant solution would go on to feature in many subsequent *Zelda* games and become a staple of the series.

Other changes to the use of weaponry and items were considered too, according to Tezuka. "At the start of development, we wanted players to be able to freely choose which weapons to hold, not just the sword and shield," explains the game director. "We also thought about having these weapons combine, say for example, having the Bow & Arrows set to the A Button and a Bomb to B Button so that when you use them together (i.e. press both the buttons), Link would shoot an arrow with a bomb attached." This would have revolutionised *Zelda*'s combat system, but ultimately didn't come to pass – however, it might sound familiar to fans of the series. "In the end we didn't use this in *A Link To The Past*, as Shigeru Miyamoto requested that Link always have the sword equipped," Tezuka recalls. "We were able to implement this system in the next title, *Link's Awakening*, though."



Working with the SNES also opened up a world of new possibilities for the Nintendo development team. "The new hardware allowed us to do things we hadn't been able to until that point. I'd only been drawing four-colour pixel images up until then, so even simply just increasing the number of colours available to use to 16 or 256 colours, as well as being able to use high-quality sounds, was really exciting for me," explains Tezuka. "Figuring out how best to effectively reflect the features of the hardware into a game is always a challenge that Nintendo's game designers face, and not limited to this game," notes Kensuke Tanabe, the scriptwriter for *A Link To The Past*. "For me, who'd studied visuals at university, being able to use two 'animation cells' and having the possibility to scroll them separately was a huge deal."

The technique that Tanabe refers to above is that of using multiple background layers. On the NES, it was only possible to draw a single layer of background graphics and a single layer of sprite graphics. With the SNES, developers had the luxury of multiple background layers. For example, in *A Link To The Past*, one layer is used to display the stage layout and a second layer is reserved for special effects. A third layer is used to display the HUD, which never moves. "Using it allowed us to create the raining scene at the very start of the adventure, as well as show sunlight filtering down through the leaves in the forest," Tanabe recalls of the special effects layer. "It's the effect of the sunlight in the forest that I'm particularly fond of. I'm also really pleased that we were able to display which floor a player is on by using two "animation cells". This was actually a suggestion from the engineering team."



» [SNES] The memorable rainy intro to *A Link To The Past* was only possible with the power of the SNES.

MAGIC POWDER
This can transform enemies into weak or even helpful creatures!

FIRE ROD
Use this to send a burning blast in the direction of your foes.

ICE ROD
Freeze the enemy with this vital piece of magical weaponry.

BOMBOS MEDALLION
Hit everything on screen with fire magic, at great magical cost.

FLUTE
This ocarina-shaped object can summon a bird for fast travel.

BUG-CATCHING NET
If you want to put a bee or fairy in a bottle, you'll need this.

BOOK OF MUDORA
This allows Link to read Ancient Hylian, often used in magical places.

BOTTLE
These handy containers can hold potions, fairies and even bees.

PEGASUS SHOES
Footwear that allows Link to perform a speedy dash attack.

POWER GLOVE
No dodgy NES peripherals here – this lets Link lift some heavy objects.

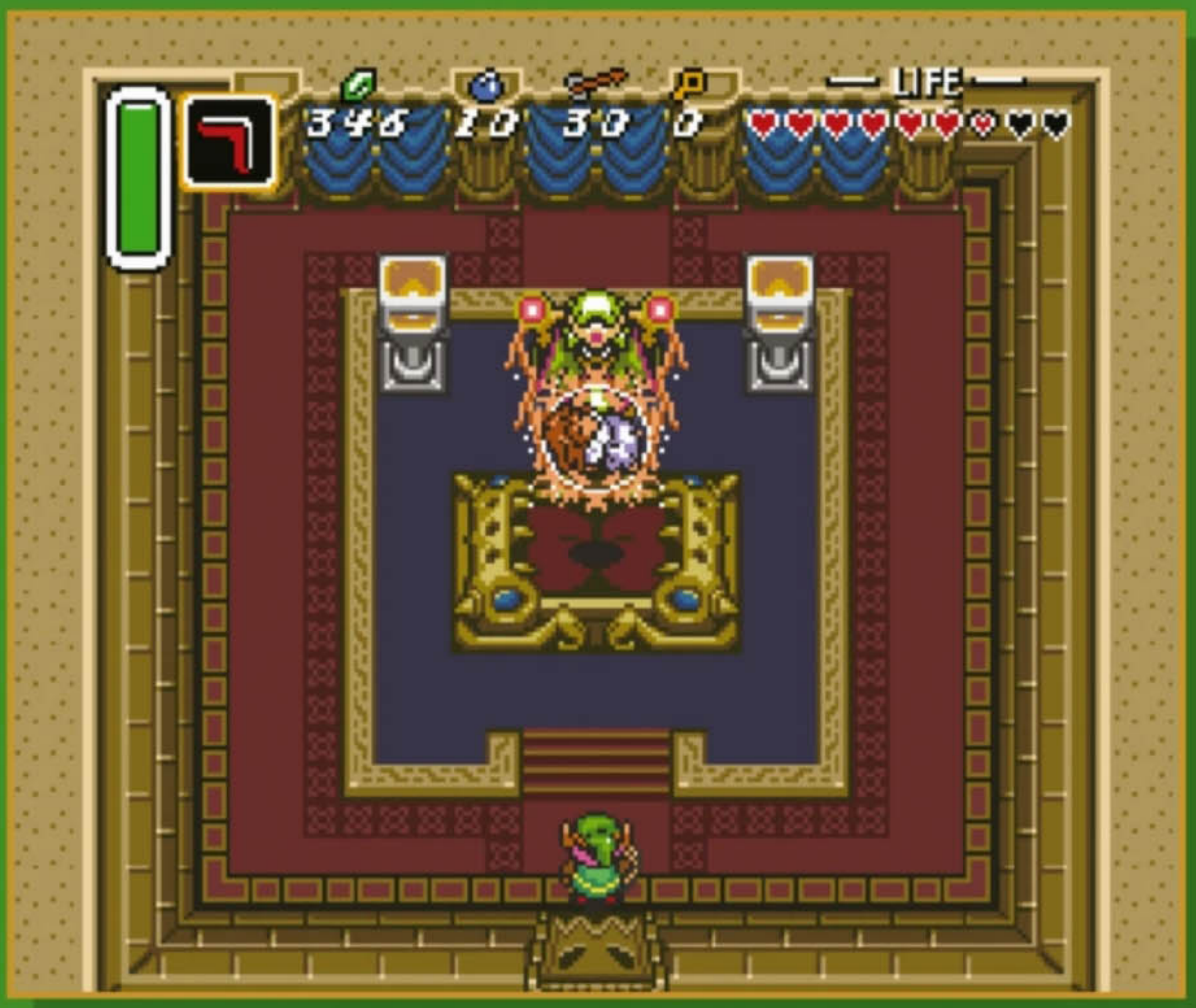
FLIPPERS
Worth the 500 Rupees the Zora charges, as you'll be able to swim!

MOON PEARL
Without it, Link would lose his human form in the Dark World.

> **"Shigeru Miyamoto requested that Link always have the sword equipped"**
> Takashi Tezuka

Despite the new possibilities, technical issues were rare. "Our game designers had a pretty good idea of what could be done on the hardware back then, so I don't believe we had any unexpected implementations," Tezuka confirms, though he does note one important exception. "Having said that, though, we had a long battle with the memory size, and I remember very clearly that the engineering team worked extremely hard to optimise it."

Prior to *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*, all of Nintendo's first-party SNES games had used a minimal ROM size of just four megabits. Not only did the new *Zelda* require eight megabits of storage, it was pushing that limit. A simple graphical compression routine was brought over from *Super Mario World* to combat this, which saved space by limiting many graphical tiles to eight colours, rather than the standard 16 that the SNES is capable of. With data duplication cut to an absolute minimum, the game was able to fit into the ROM allocated. Even then, translating the game from Japanese once again challenged this limit. In his 1992 *Famitsu* interview, Miyamoto explained that the original plan was to use a higher capacity cartridge for the translated game, and use what extra space remained afterwards to make some improvements to the Western releases. However, further compression rendered increased capacity unnecessary.

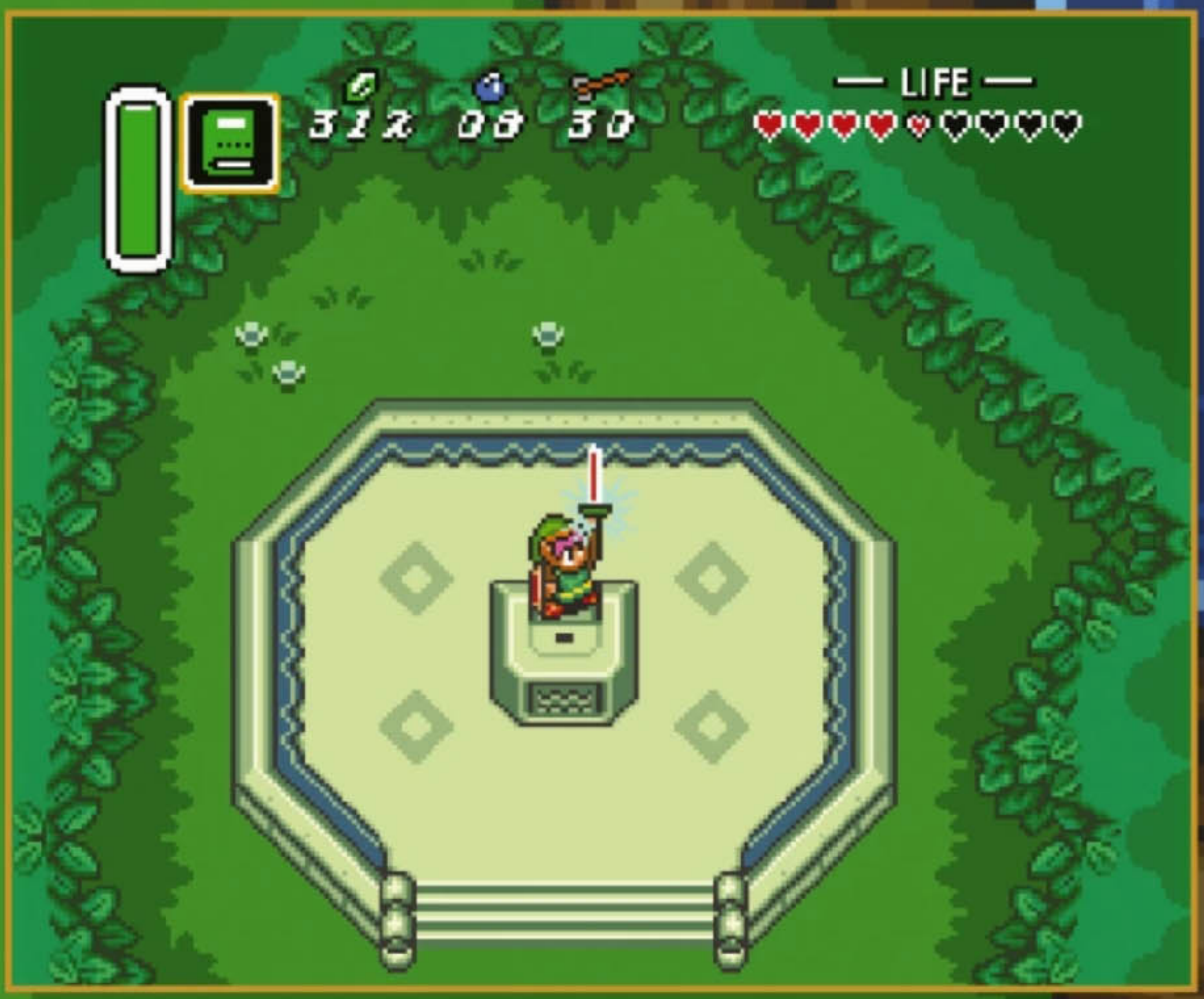


» [SNES] The dastardly wizard Agahnim has got Zelda, and now he's zapping her into the Dark World!

The 16-bit versions of both *Mario* and *Zelda* had entered development at the same time, but while *Mario* stuck to its planned trajectory and made it out for the November 1990 launch of the console, *Zelda*'s planned arrival in March was going to be impossible. In fact, by the time that eager gamers in Japan were trying out the new Super Famicom for the first time, Nintendo EAD was only just confident of the game system it had settled upon! The next step was to add the additional staff to complete the work by adding in enemies, a scenario and more. In an interview for the official *Super Mario World* guide book in Japan, Miyamoto estimated that the game would be completed by Children's Day (May 5th) in 1991 in anticipation of a summer release, but this turned out to be an underestimation. According to Miyamoto's 1992 Famitsu interview, implementing these final features took about eight months, pushing the game back further from summer to winter.

If there's any reason that *A Link To The Past* took longer than expected, it might well be because of how much attention was paid to the plot of the game. Right from the start, it was clear that it would be told in more detail and with greater dramatic flair than the NES *Zelda* games were capable of, and that item acquisition would be closely tied to story progression. A clear example of this comes in the game's opening sequence – by contrast to the earlier games, the SNES game offered a far more structured introduction to Link's quest. "In *A Link To The Past*, the game starts with a dark, rainy scene, with Link being just a regular village boy who, in the same situation as the player, doesn't really know what's going on, but just follows Princess Zelda's voice and works to save her. However, in doing this he somehow ends up becoming an outlaw. We wanted players to start feeling excited and wonder what will happen next," explains Tezuka. It's a dramatic opening, but finding and rescuing the princess so early on definitely surprised some players, who felt that the game was going to end quite suddenly. "We didn't intend to make players feel like the game was going to end there," admits Tezuka, who always saw Link's ascension to heroism in a rather different way.

The previous games had just dropped the player into the world and allowed them to get on with it, but this would not be an approach that would be repeated in *A Link To The Past*. "We didn't have Link start out as a sword-wielding hero right from the start, because we had already decided at the beginning of the project that we wanted him to awaken as a hero when he pulls out the Master Sword," explains Tezuka. "We did



» [SNES] The moment when Link gains the Master Sword is a pivotal and iconic scene in the game.

▶ make a number of adjustments to the placement and ordering of the weapons and items so that we could get the ideal flow for the game, no matter the player or play style," he continues. Instead of starting out as a bona-fide hero, Link would acquire a variety of items over the course of the game and experience his development naturally. "We thought that players would form an emotional connection with Link as they play and by the time he ultimately becomes a hero, it would just be natural that he can use a variety of different weapons," Tezuka confirms.

Of course, the most memorable weapon to be introduced in *A Link To The Past* was the Master Sword, a blade that has endured over the decades as a key piece of the *Zelda* mythology. As Tezuka alluded to earlier, the scene where Link gains this piece of equipment was one of the most crucial parts of the project. "Kensuke Tanabe already had an idea for a truly memorable hero-awakening scene when we started this project," recalls the director, crediting the script writer for the idea. "In the midst of a forest, with light filtering down through the leaves, the sword stood waiting for someone worthy of wielding it to arrive (the illustration on the Japanese package shows this). Link draws the sword out as the light trickles through the leaves."

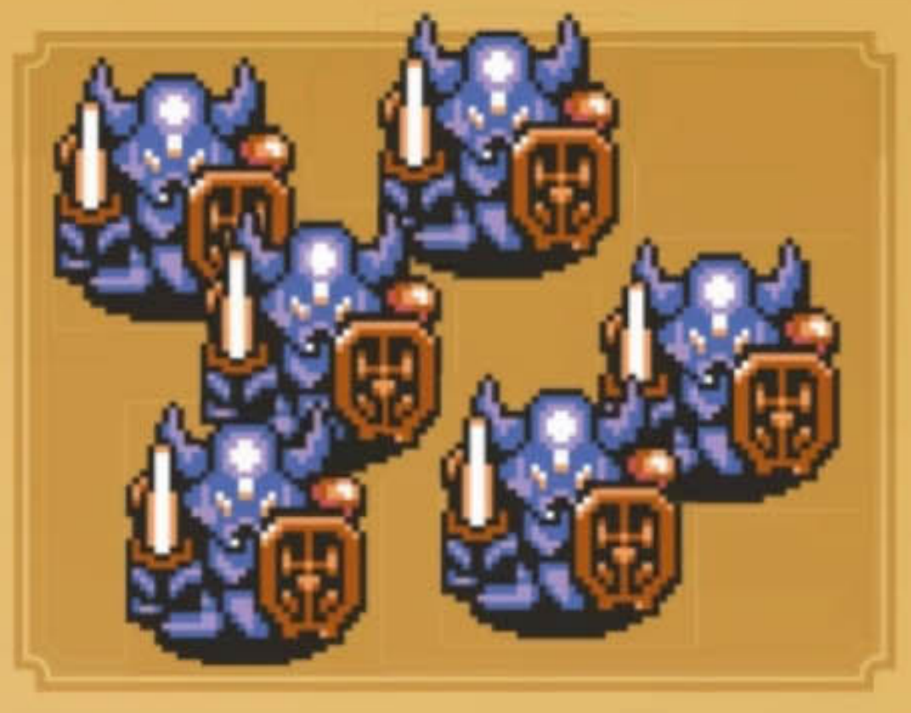
In order to draw the sword, one needs to have both inherited the blood of the family of knights who protect Princess Zelda, as well as possess the three pendants. From the moment Link pulls the sword out, it recognises him as a hero, and grants him its power," says Tezuka, with his accurate recall of the plot standing as testament to the importance with which it was treated. The Master Sword was also given its mythological importance at this early stage, as Tezuka recalls: "We also decided then that the Master Sword was a sword that alone holds the power to repel evil, and I suspect this is why it continues to carry such an important role in the rest of the series."

However, the Master Sword scene isn't just symbolic. "It's at this point that the game's real battle starts," the director notes. "Our main aim was to show the birth of a hero in a scene fitting of *The Legend Of Zelda*, and overlap this with a sense of achievement for the player that they have been recognised as a hero after having overcome many challenges." Instead of being a moment of triumph, it's a turning point which ultimately leads to the introduction of the game's dual world concept. "What we had decided on from the start was that Link would first become a hero in the Light World and defeat the first boss," says Tezuka. "From that point is when his battle to defeat the real enemy, Ganon, in the Dark World begins."

The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past was released on November 21st 1991 in Japan, with North American and European releases following on April 13th 1992 and September 24th 1992 respectively. No matter where you were in the world, the game was regarded

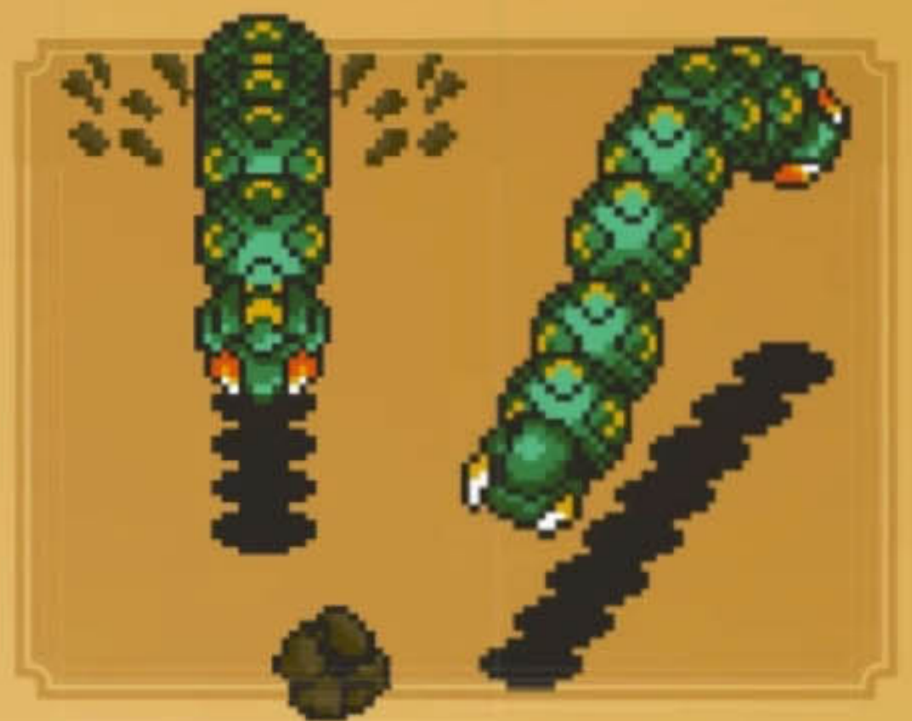
BOSS RUSH

While many foes stand in Link's way, these bosses are easily the deadliest dozen…



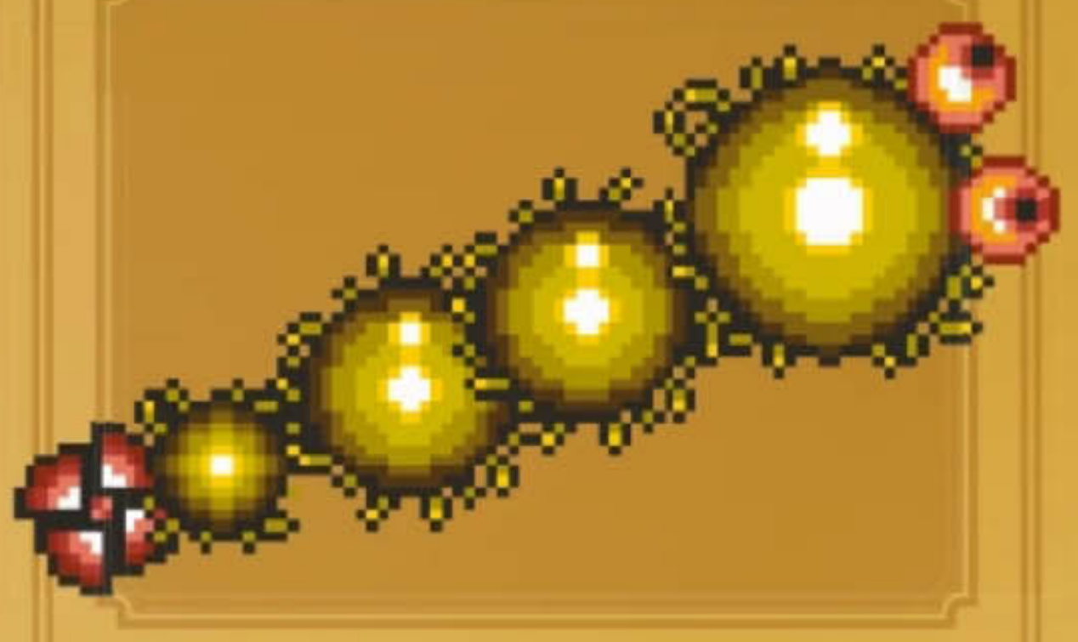
ARMOS KNIGHTS

■ These six knights attack in a regimented formation, no matter where they're pushed in combat. When they attack in a full row, make sure to slow one knight down with arrows to break the line.



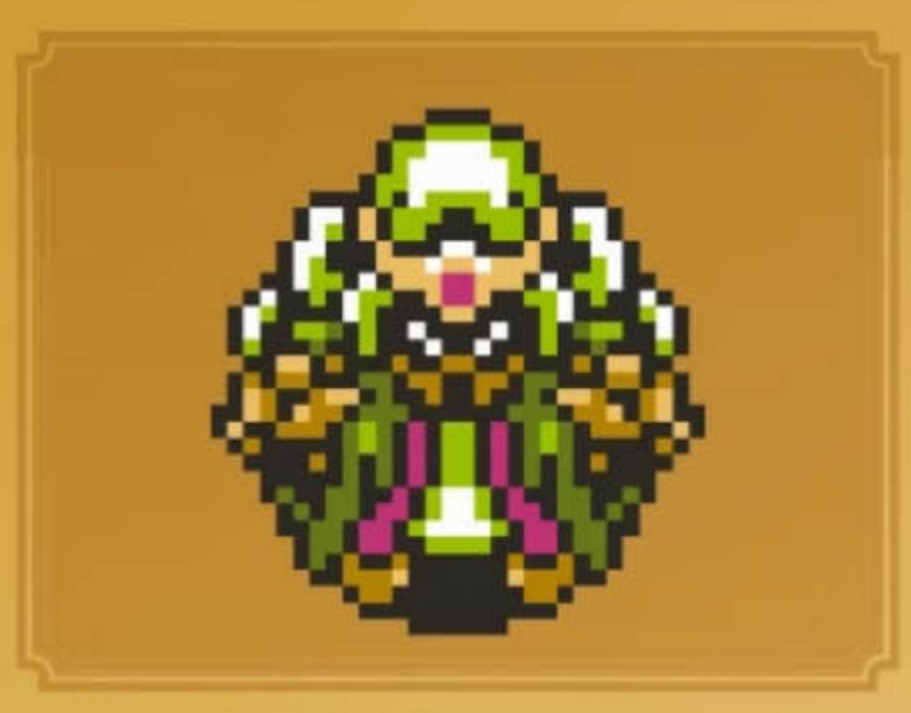
LANMOLAS

■ It's hard to predict the movements of this trio of burrowing sandworm-like enemies. Their heads are their weak points – the sword is effective, but try arrows or the ice rod if you need distance.



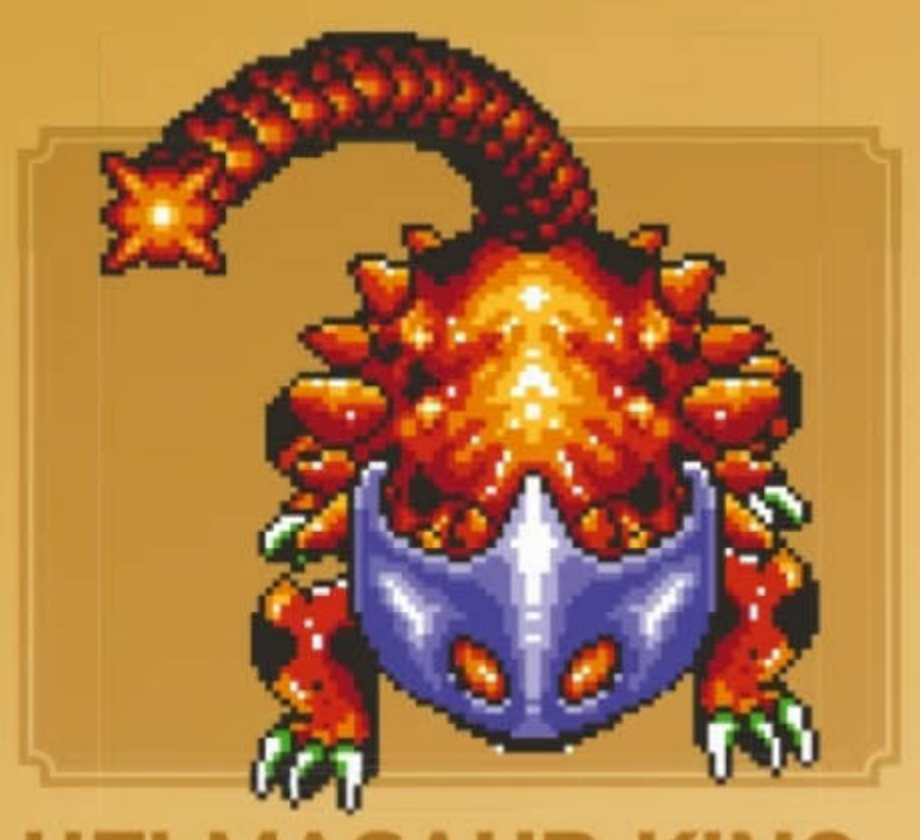
MOLDORM

■ This nasty piece of work likes to push you off the stage onto the floor below, which resets the battle completely. Try your hardest to avoid being hit as you swing your sword at its tail, which is its weakness.



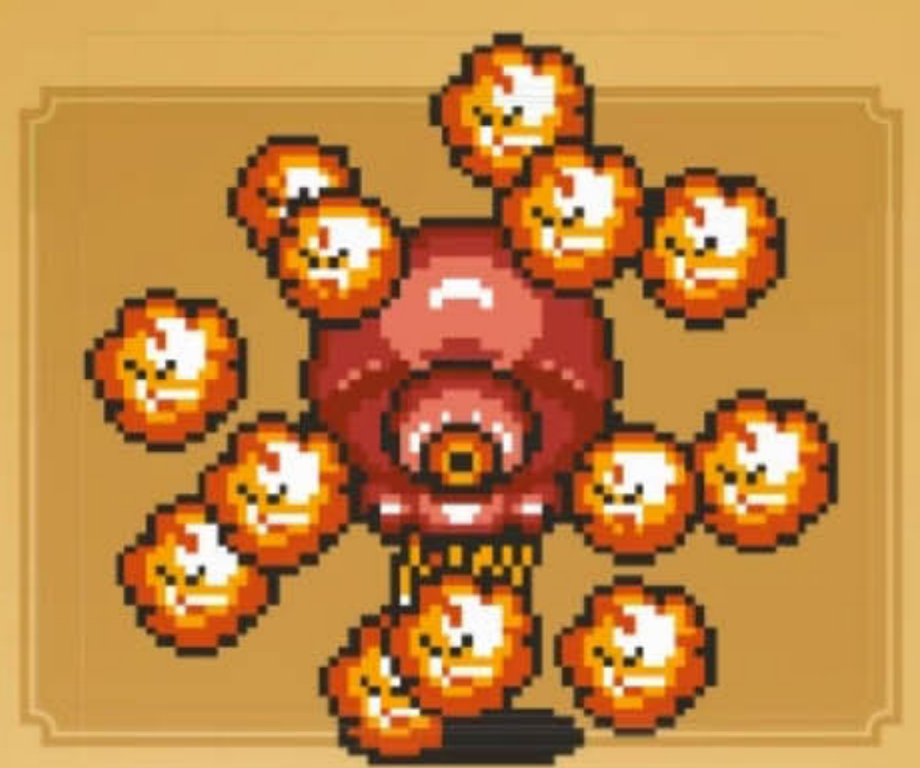
AGAHNIM

■ The wizard behind Zelda's kidnap looks unthreatening, but wields potent magic attack spells. Some of these can be reflected back by swinging the Master Sword, so get ready to return service!



HELMASAUR KING

■ This fiery-tempered individual will give any self-proclaimed heroes a warm welcome with his hot breath. To cool him off, first smash his mask with the hammer and then hit him with the sword until he's dead.



ARRGHUS

■ This floating foe is a tricky one to hit, and brings an entourage of meanies with it. Pull away the smaller Arrgi with the Hookshot, and then get to work with the sword when Arrghus crashes to the floor.

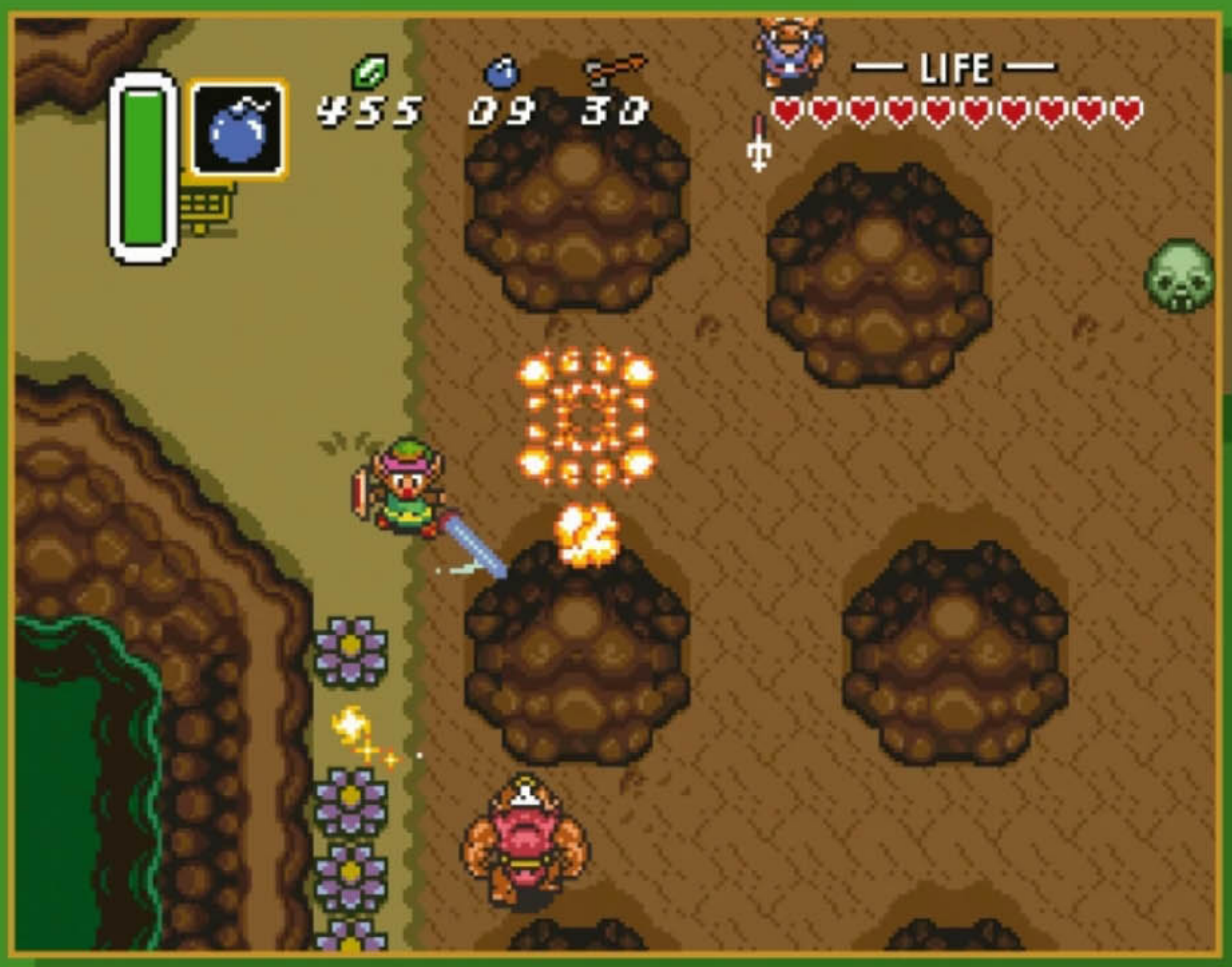
> **“Our main aim was to show the birth of a hero in a scene fitting of a Zelda [game]”**
> Takashi Tezuka

as an instant classic. Critical praise was unanimous – *Computer & Video Games* awarded the game 89%, noting that “the elements of strategy and adventure are added treats rather than annoying extras.” A review in *Mean Machines* scored the game 95% and declared it “simply the greatest exploration/adventure game available for a console,” while *Super Play Gold*’s 93% review noted that “you’re unlikely to want to switch the game off”. The game sold a massive 4.61 million copies on the SNES, and ultimately spawned both a successful rerelease on the Game Boy Advance as well as a successor for the Nintendo 3DS, *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds*.

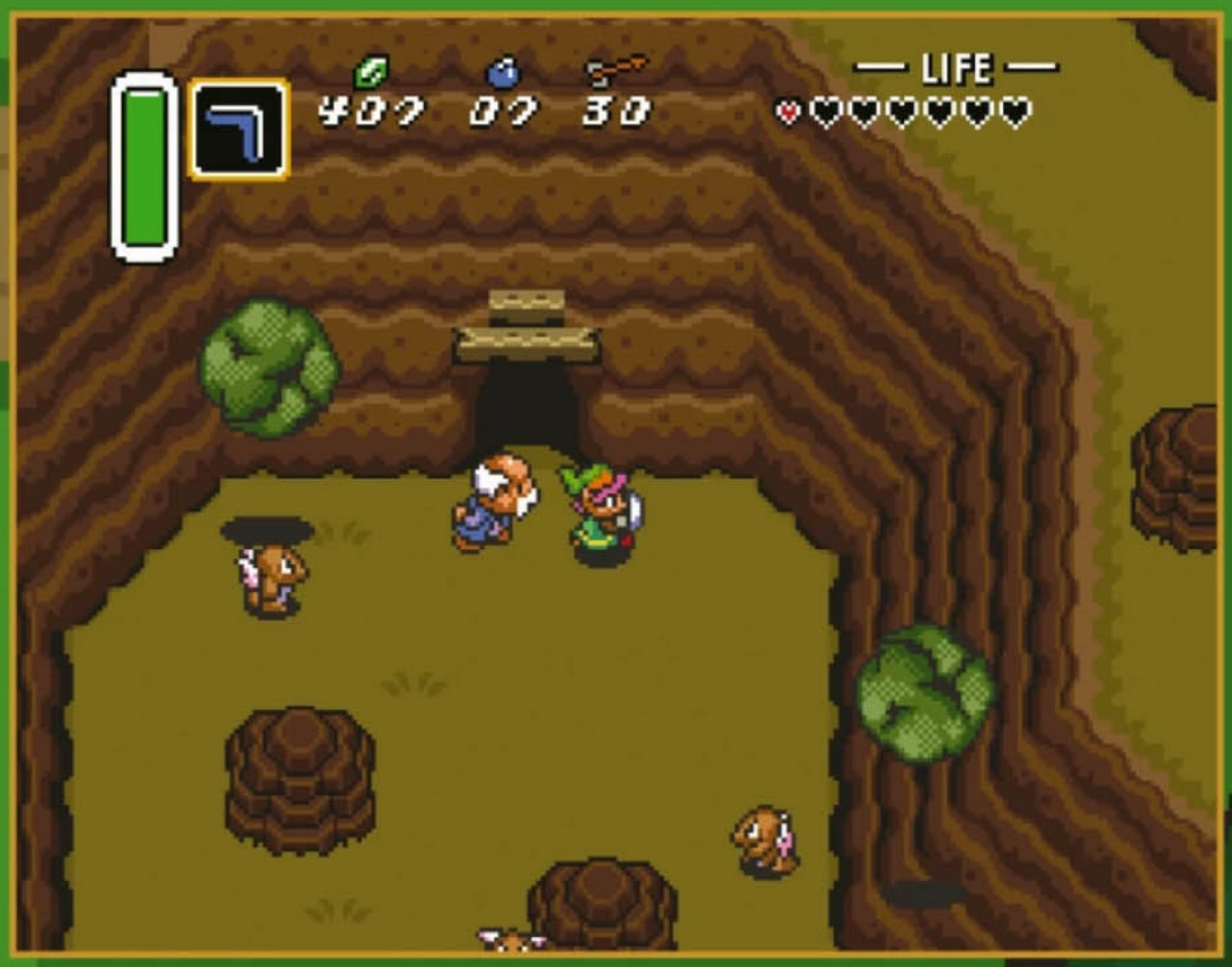
Despite the excellent quality of *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*, it would ultimately prove to be the end of the line for the *Zelda* series as players had known it, as the series was about to undergo a radical change. The next mainline sequel was *The Legend Of Zelda: The Ocarina Of Time*, which transformed the series with open 3D spaces and more. While smaller 2D *Zelda* games would continue to appear on the Game Boy platforms, including the excellent *Link’s Awakening*, *Oracle Of Ages And Oracle Of Seasons* and *The Minish Cap*, there was never another 2D Zelda game to get the big budget treatment that *A Link To The Past* received.

But that’s not to say that *A Link To The Past* hasn’t had a lasting influence, not by a long shot. Elements from the game including the spin attack, the Hookshot and the Master Sword have become series regulars, and that dual-world concept has been revisited very frequently – just look at young Link and adult Link in *Ocarina Of Time*, or human Link and wolf Link in *Twilight Princess*. The third *Zelda* game is as tightly woven into the legacy of the series as any of the other major entries.

Ultimately, *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* is one of those rare games that not only achieved critical and commercial success, but has stood the test of time and continues to attract new fans today. How does the team feel about this sustained success? “We’re truly thankful, and consider it a great privilege,” Tezuka says, but he’s careful not to rest on his laurels. “At the same time, it also drives us to create new games that will surpass this acclaim.”



» [SNES] Soldiers take pig form in the Dark World, and you won’t see any other humans.



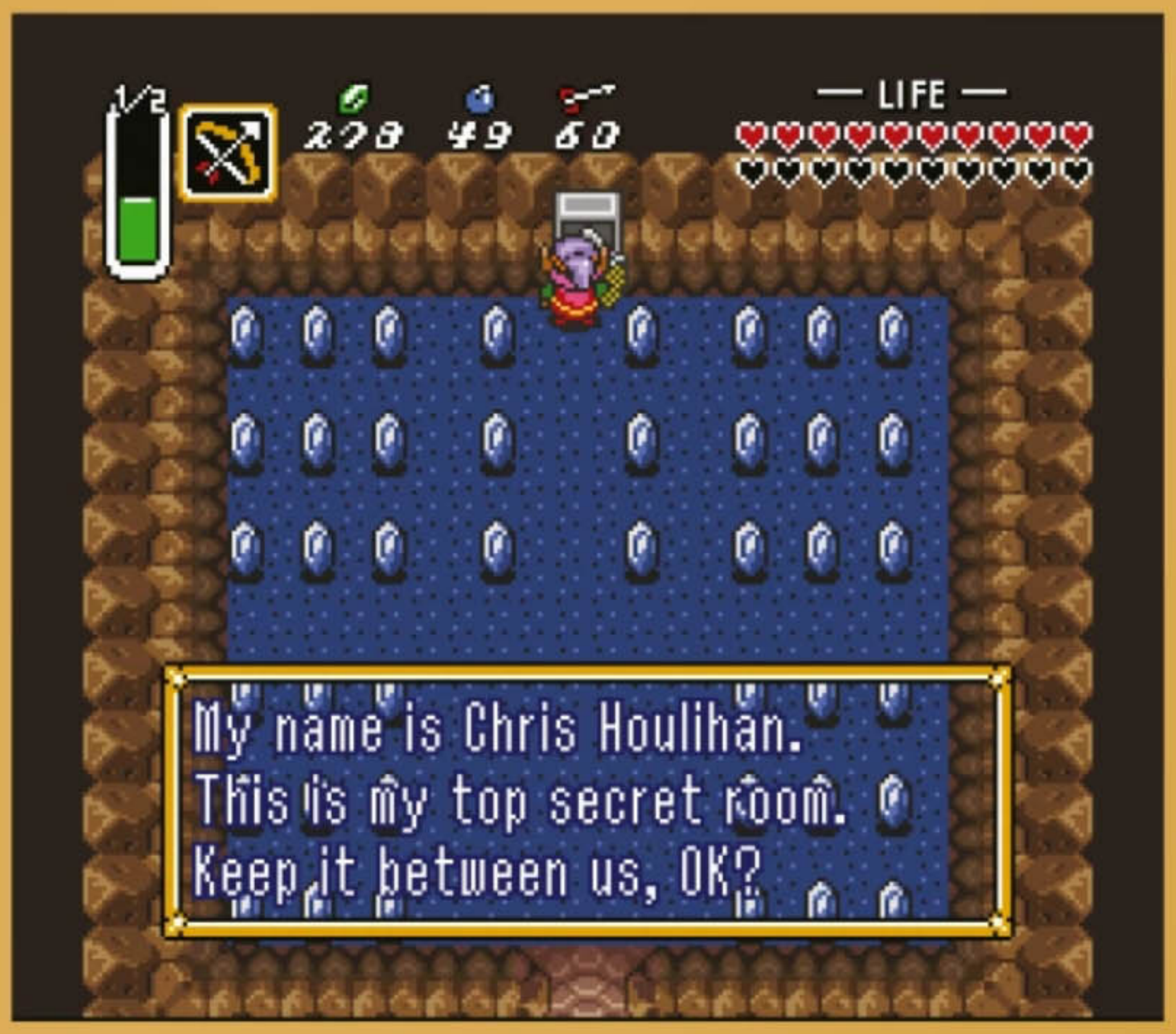
» [SNES] Climbing the mountain to Hera Tower is dangerous, thanks to a constant rain of rocks.

I AM ERROR...

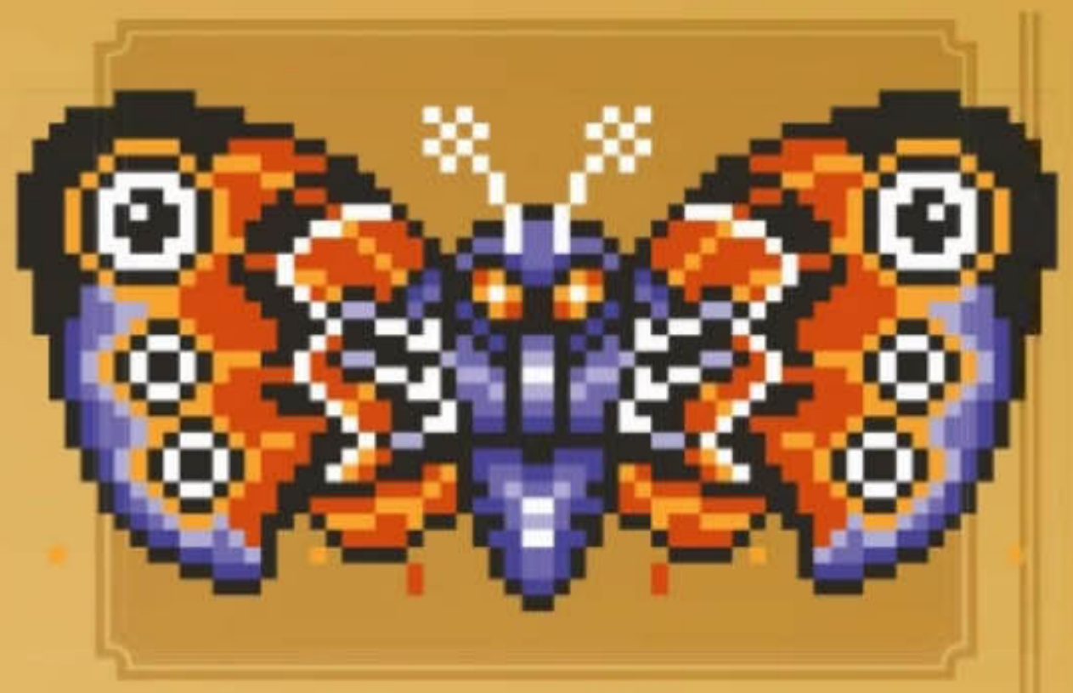
The story behind one of gaming’s most infamous secrets...

Back in the early Nineties, we can’t imagine many American kids turning down the chance to get their name featured in a NES game. With that in mind, a contest ran in *Nintendo Power* during 1990, allowing the winner to win just that prize. The eventual winner was a chap named Chris Houlihan, whose name was eventually incorporated into not a NES game, but a SNES game – *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*.

Of course, there was a catch. There’s every chance that you might have missed that young Nintendo fan’s crowning moment of glory, as Chris Houlihan’s secret room only appears as an error handling measure – if the game can’t determine Link’s next destination, he ends up in this Rupee-filled room and exits to his own house. Plus, if you played the game in any language other than English, Chris Houlihan’s name is nowhere to be seen!

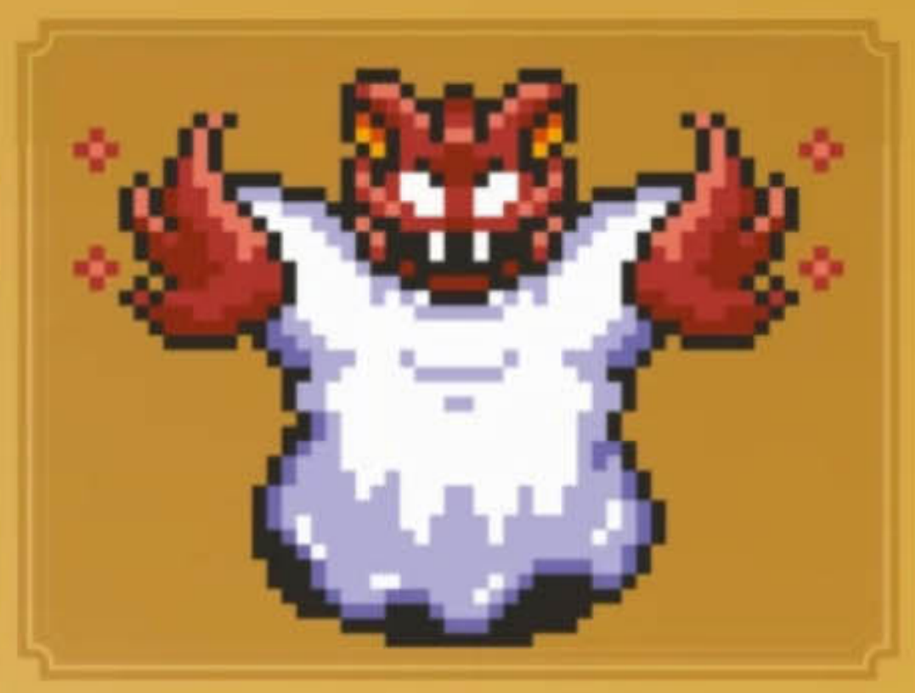


My name is Chris Houlihan.
This is my top secret room.
Keep it between us, OK?



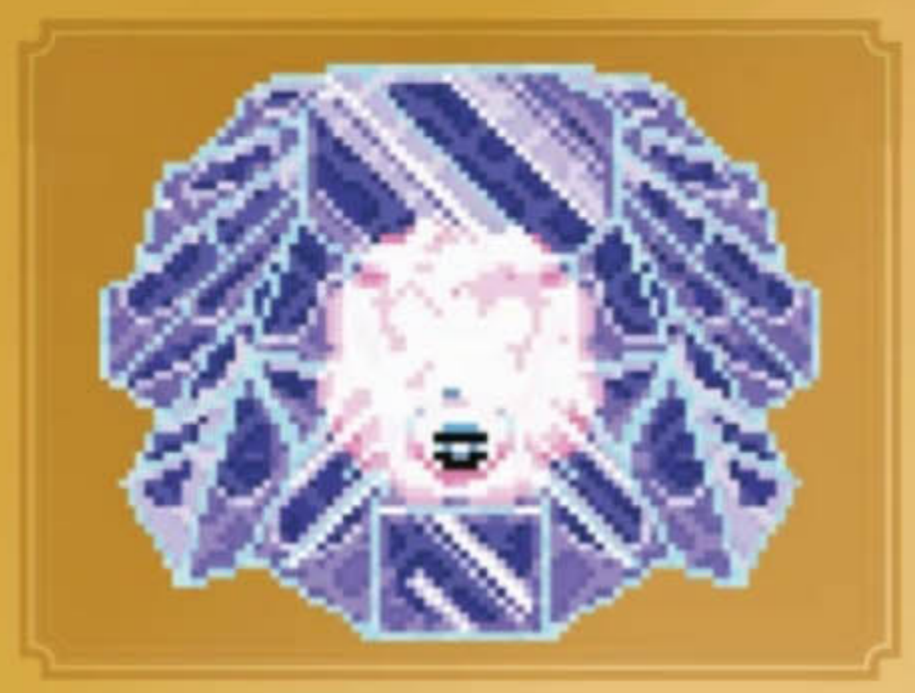
MOTHULA

■ Not only does Mothula move erratically around the stage, it fights you in a room with moving floors. If you’re struggling to get close enough for the sword to hit, blast it from afar with the Fire Rod.



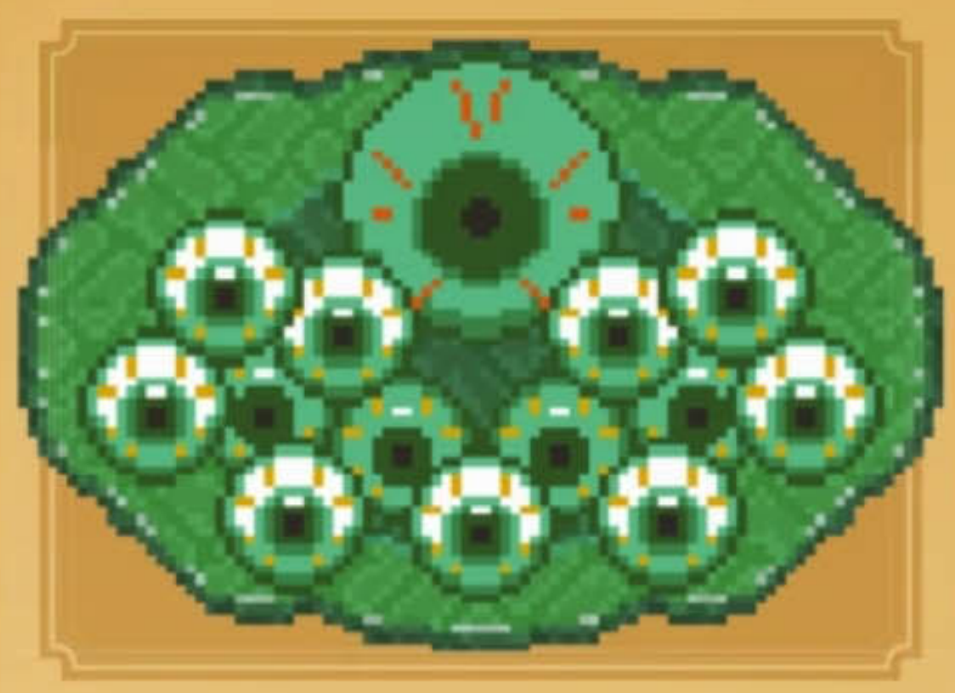
BLIND THE THIEF

■ This photosensitive thief disguises himself as a maiden before revealing his true formidable form. There’s no clever strategy here – hit him with the sword and avoid his floating heads and projectiles.



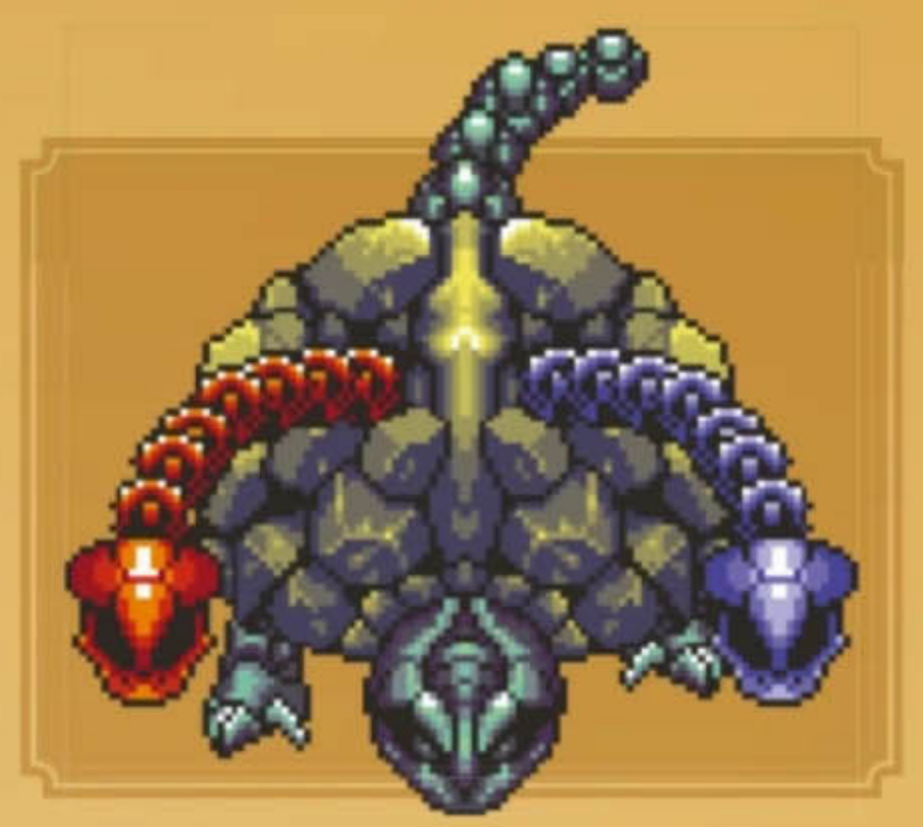
KHOLDSTARE

■ There’s a frosty atmosphere in this boss fight, and Link will slide around easily. Melt its icy shield with a fire attack (the Bombos Medallion works well), before finishing it with the sword or Fire Rod.



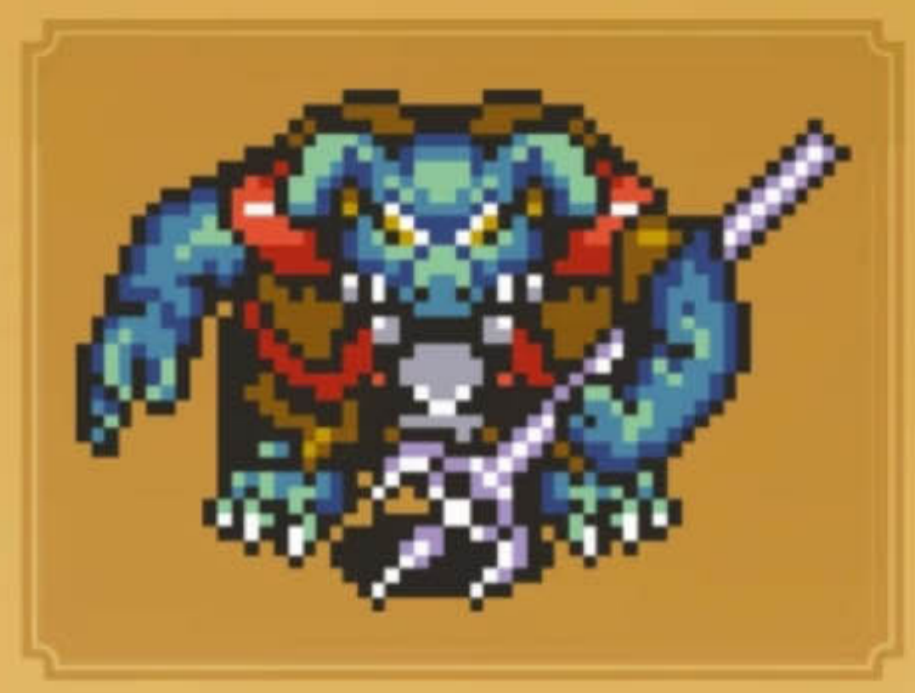
VITREOUS

■ The slime that this gaggle of eyeballs lives in is both disgusting and deadly to touch! Slice down each smaller eyeball as it launches itself at you, before taking out the biggest one from afar with the bow.



TRINEXX

■ Three heads are deadlier than one, as far as this boss is concerned. Stun the red head with the Ice Rod and the blue head with the Fire Rod before attacking, then finish Trinexx off by hitting the glowing orb.

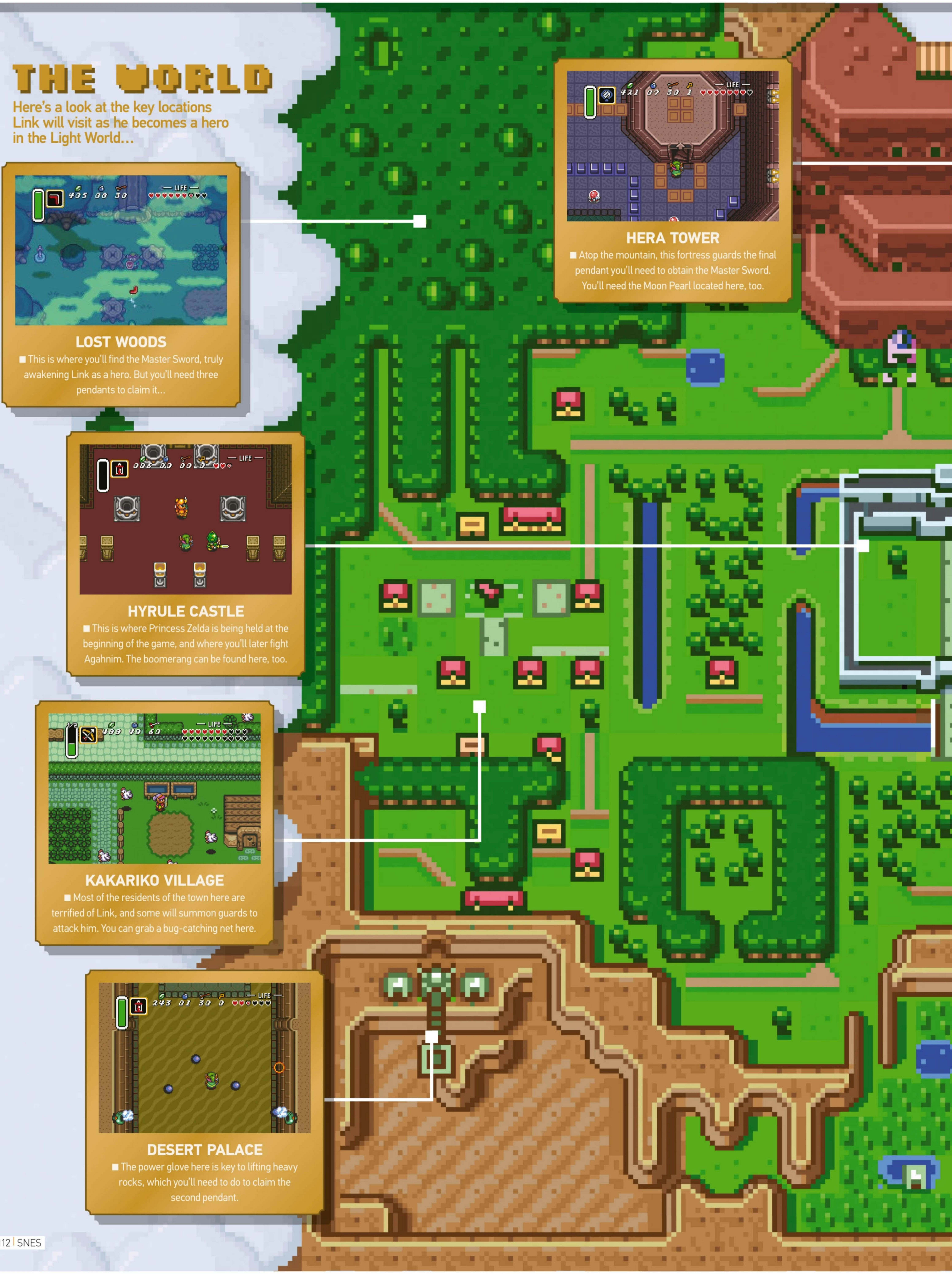


GANON

■ The biggest of big bads, Ganon is the swine behind this whole evil scheme. To finish him off, make sure the room is brightly lit, hit him with the sword to stun him and shoot him with a silver arrow.

THE WORLD

Here's a look at the key locations Link will visit as he becomes a hero in the Light World…



HERA TOWER

■ Atop the mountain, this fortress guards the final pendant you'll need to obtain the Master Sword. You'll need the Moon Pearl located here, too.

LOST WOODS

■ This is where you'll find the Master Sword, truly awakening Link as a hero. But you'll need three pendants to claim it…

HYRULE CASTLE

■ This is where Princess Zelda is being held at the beginning of the game, and where you'll later fight Agahnim. The boomerang can be found here, too.

KAKARIKO VILLAGE

■ Most of the residents of the town here are terrified of Link, and some will summon guards to attack him. You can grab a bug-catching net here.

DESERT PALACE

■ The power glove here is key to lifting heavy rocks, which you'll need to do to claim the second pendant.

ZORA'S DOMAIN

■ Make sure to bring some cash with you here, as you'll be able to pick up some useful flippers that allow Link to swim.

EASTERN PALACE

■ You can grab the all-important bow here, as well as collecting your first pendant. You'll have to fight for it, though!

SAGE'S HIDEOUT

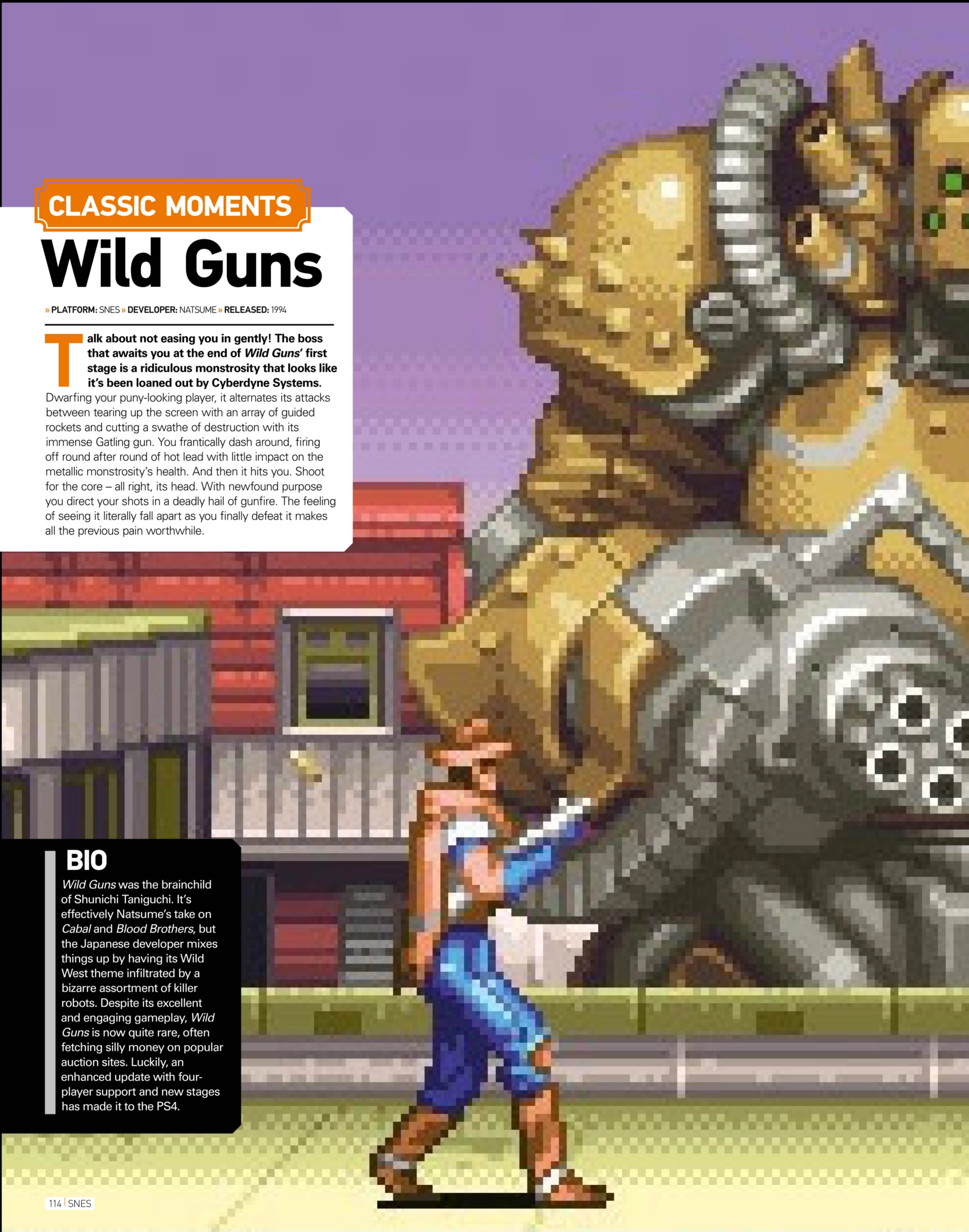
■ The man who'll set Link on his path to heroism is taking refuge from the forces of evil here, and is holding onto the Pegasus Boots for you.

LAKE HYLIA SECRET CAVE

■ This remote cave holds a particularly useful item, the Ice Rod – it's worth the big detour to claim it as soon as possible.

LINK'S HOUSE

■ This is where you'll start your quest, and where you'll often resume it. You can pick up the lantern here at the very start of the game, too.



CLASSIC MOMENTS

Wild Guns

» **PLATFORM:** SNES » **DEVELOPER:** NATSUME » **RELEASED:** 1994

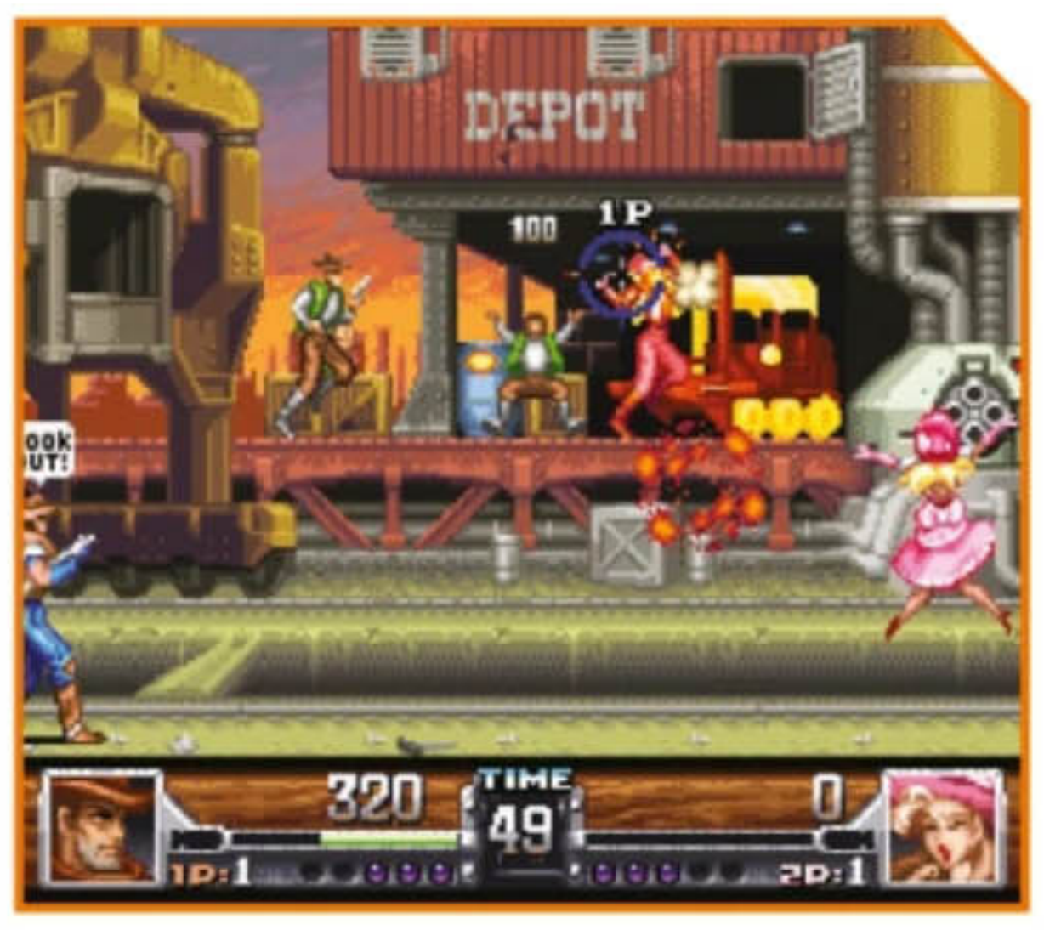
Talk about not easing you in gently! The boss that awaits you at the end of *Wild Guns'* first stage is a ridiculous monstrosity that looks like it's been loaned out by Cyberdyne Systems. Dwarfing your puny-looking player, it alternates its attacks between tearing up the screen with an array of guided rockets and cutting a swathe of destruction with its immense Gatling gun. You frantically dash around, firing off round after round of hot lead with little impact on the metallic monstrosity's health. And then it hits you. Shoot for the core – all right, its head. With newfound purpose you direct your shots in a deadly hail of gunfire. The feeling of seeing it literally fall apart as you finally defeat it makes all the previous pain worthwhile.

BIO

Wild Guns was the brainchild of Shunichi Taniguchi. It's effectively Natsume's take on *Cabal* and *Blood Brothers*, but the Japanese developer mixes things up by having its Wild West theme infiltrated by a bizarre assortment of killer robots. Despite its excellent and engaging gameplay, *Wild Guns* is now quite rare, often fetching silly money on popular auction sites. Luckily, an enhanced update with four-player support and new stages has made it to the PS4.

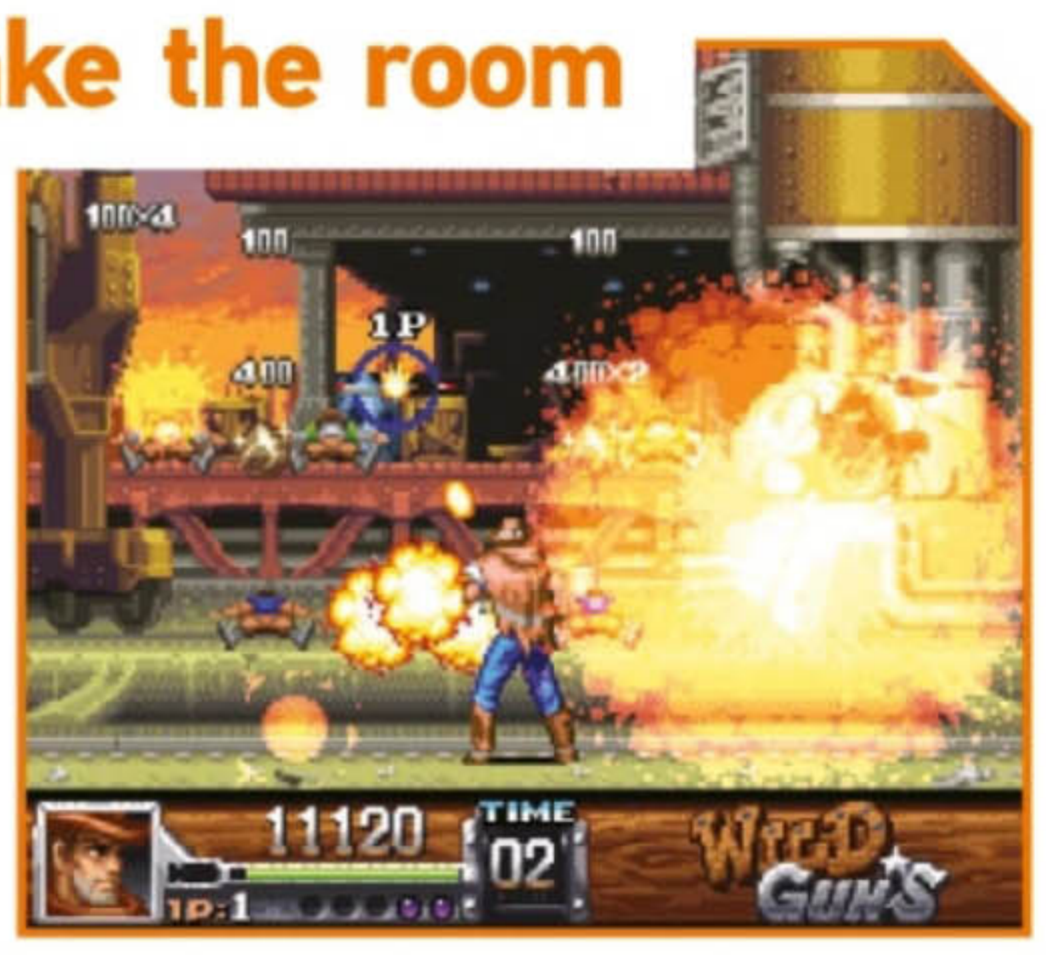
MORE CLASSIC WILD GUNS MOMENTS

The lone gunmen



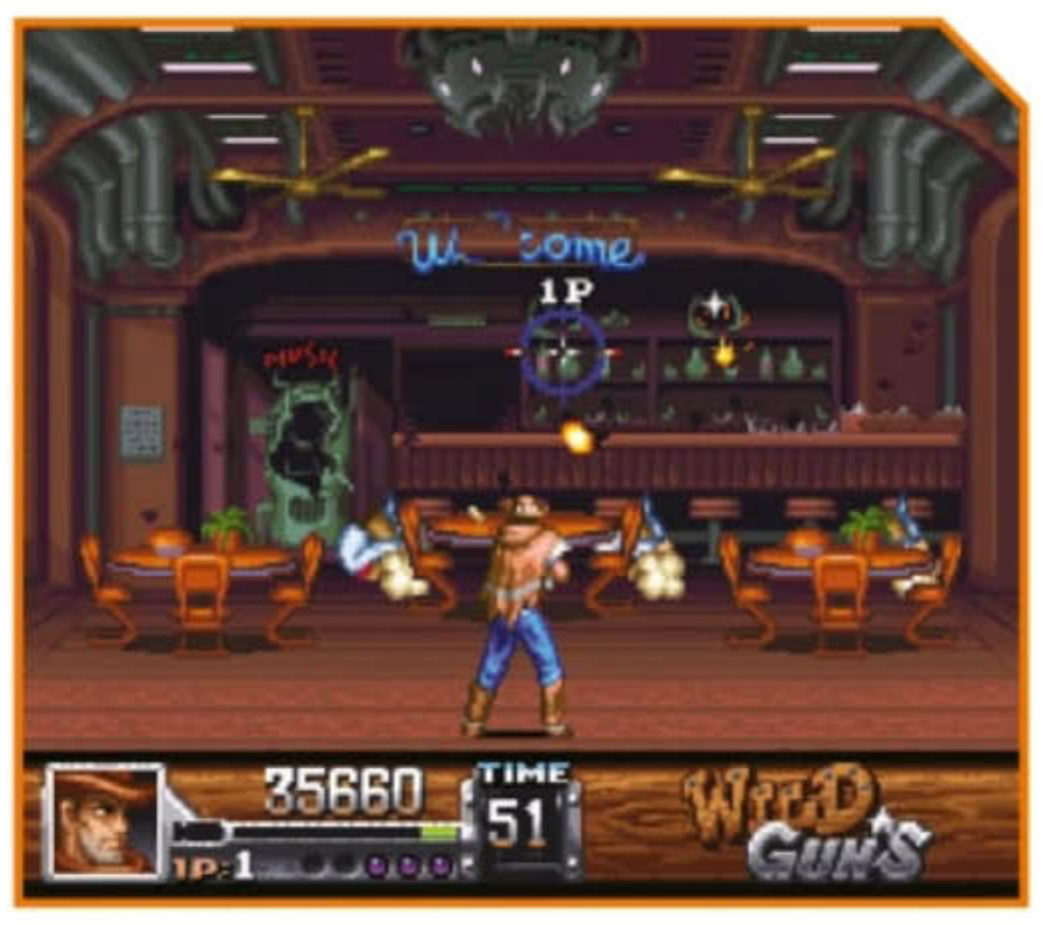
Wild Guns comes into its own when playing with a friend. The sheer number of enemies means you'll need a decent system for crowd control or it'll all end in tears. Our top tactic is to divide the screen in half, with each player focusing on their own side to minimise casualties. Just don't cross the streams or you may well find yourself playing on your own next time.

Boom, boom, shake, shake the room



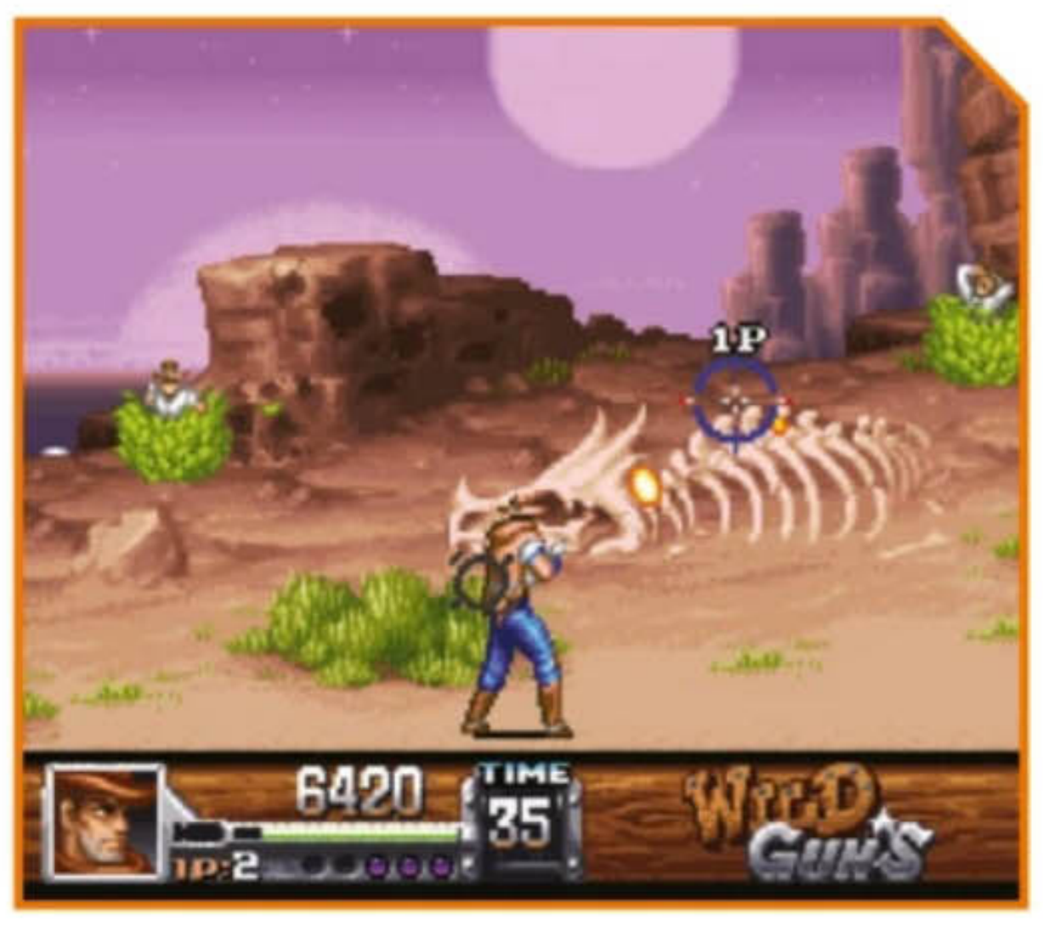
The assault in *Wild Guns* is relentless. When not being attacked by cowboys riding on flying saucers, you're dodging giant robots that split open to fire missiles. Sometimes you just need to take a breather. *Wild Guns* may not be the first arcade-style game to feature a screen-clearing smart bomb, but we're pretty sure it's one of the most spectacular to gawp at.

Destruction corner



Pretty much everything on the screen can be interacted with in some fashion. Shoot a barrel and it explodes, bullet holes get left in crates, while chairs and tables become useless bits of wood. This OTT destruction is most noticeable in the saloon, where you can reduce bottles to smithereens and even obliterate a jukebox. We certainly wouldn't want to be left with that bill…

Comedy corner



Although it focuses on carnage, *Wild Guns* is also filled with fun little touches that can't help but raise a smile. One of our favourites is the comedy thwack you give to enemies that get too close, but if we had to pick one it would be the bush cowboys. These silly blighters comically appear in walking bushes, ready to take pot shots at you when they think you aren't looking.

SUPER METROID

The Metroid series went in exciting new directions with the release of this 16-bit classic. We visited Nintendo HQ to scale the summit of the Metroid series with director Yoshio Sakamoto

» Sakamoto also directed *Metroid Fusion* and *Zero Mission*.

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** R&D1/INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
- » **RELEASED:** 1994
- » **GENRE:** ADVENTURE

Heading back up to ground level as I leave the immaculate subway at Jujo Station in the south of Kyoto, I walk through this remarkably unremarkable suburb until I see the big white block that houses Nintendo's contemporary headquarters. The gates to NCL are manned by two portly, middle-aged guards who seem to project a faintly threatening presence, which is comically undone as I notice, behind them, in the back of their little booth, a stash of NCL-manufactured toy guns apparently left over from the Seventies and a selection of Nintendo character plushes from the Famicom era. This may not be the original Nintendo HQ site, but it clearly retains the company's history like a hoarding retro gamer hangs on to loose carts.

Inside, beyond the pristine lawns and shiny entrance, I enter a marble-floored, austere world whose foyer is staffed by painfully polite and correctly spoken Nintendo officials. Eventually I'm led into a meeting room on the ground floor, where I sip the o-cha kindly provided by the demure NCL woman as I wait – and slightly nervously revise my notes and cue my Dictaphone – until a smiling, ponytailed artist type arrives and immediately makes his introduction. This is Yoshio Sakamoto, producer of *Super Metroid* back in the early Nineties and still an integral Nintendo developer today. "Hajimemashite. Yoroshiku onegai shimasu."

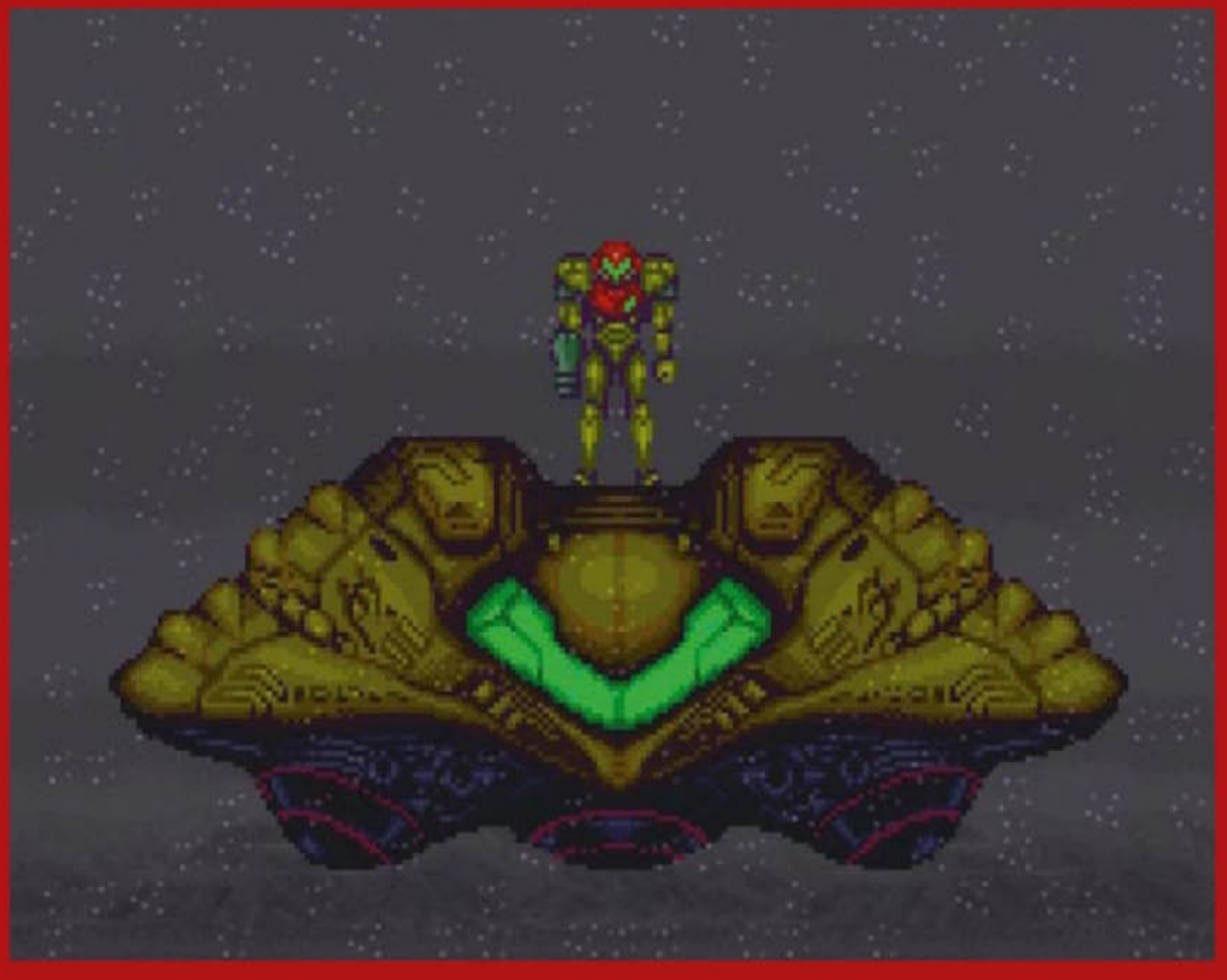
Sakamoto has brought with him a small booklet containing an overview of *Super Metroid* to aid his memory – the game was completed 15 years ago, but the *Metroid* legacy stretches back two decades – as we chat.

"To start with, there was the Famicom *Metroid* game," he recalls. Sakamoto worked on that first *Metroid* adventure, and its relevance to *Super Metroid* is particularly important because of the unchanging core concept of the 2D *Metroid* games; a core that was formed in said Famicom Disk System original of 1986.

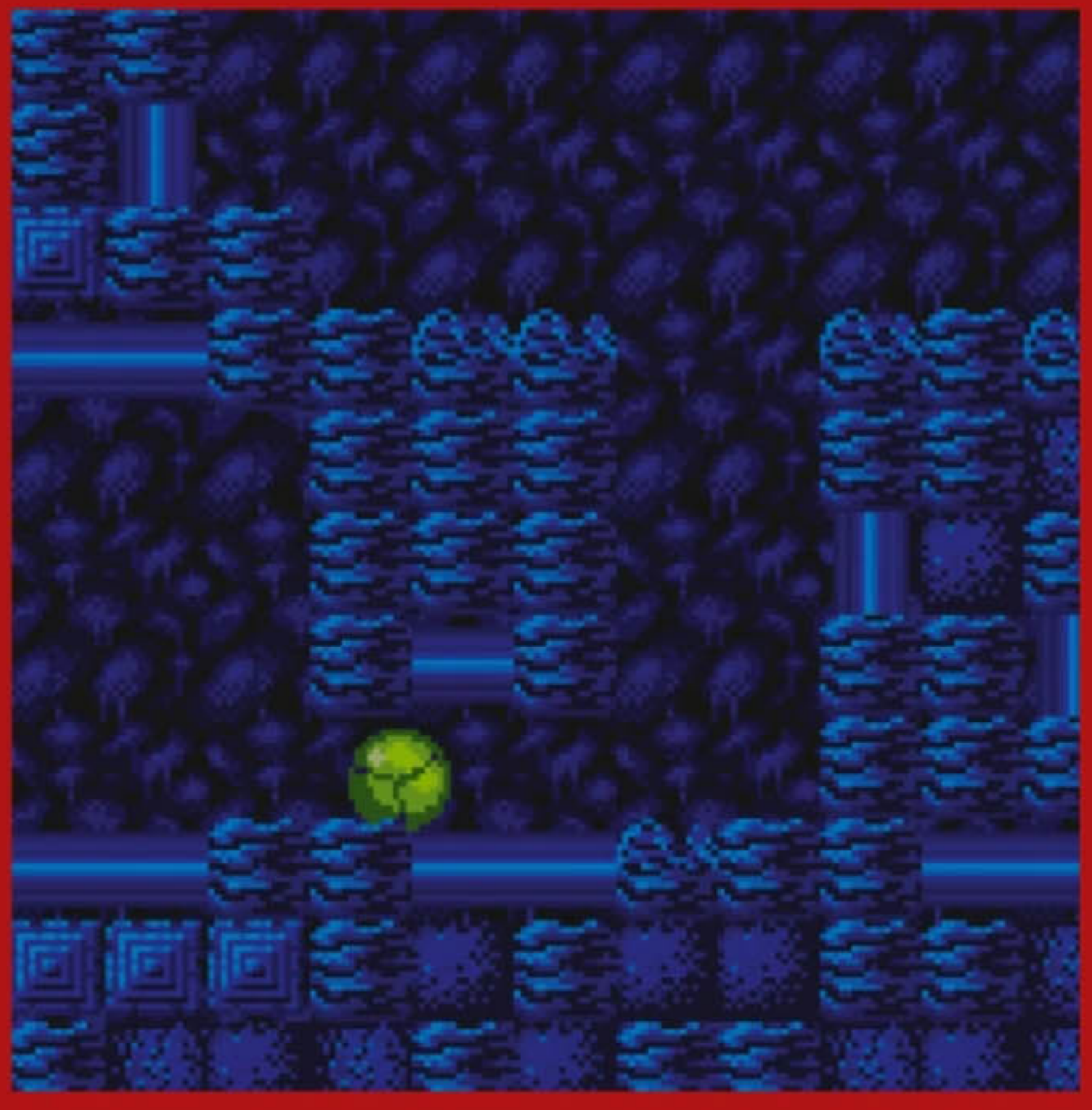
"My boss [producer Makoto Kanoh] told me that *Metroid* was really popular in North America, so he encouraged me to produce a new *Metroid* game with the high-quality graphics that were becoming possible thanks to the Super Famicom. Of course I said, 'Yes, I'd like to try doing that.' The game design and concept had already been established before *Metroid II* was produced for the Game Boy," Sakamoto explains. "When it came to making another sequel, this time for the Super Famicom, we really wanted to see how far we could push the SFC to generate greater power of expression and enhance the appearance of the game world, all while working with a basically unchanged concept. That was our initial motivation as far as *Super Metroid* was concerned: to build on the expressiveness of *Metroid II* and achieve greater presence, something closer to a reality."

Sakamoto had nothing to do with the development of *Metroid II* – at the time his services were required elsewhere within NCL – yet that sophomore title in part shaped the plan for *Super Metroid*: "As the last scene depicted Baby Metroid being born right in front of Samus's eyes… well… there's no real explanation for that in the course of the games, but that scene was another source of incentive for us in that we wanted to follow on from that ending, linking *Metroid II* with *Super Metroid*. We were determined to keep the same world-view and maintain the continuity of the story."

Aside from the basic formula of play that was set in motion by *Metroid*,

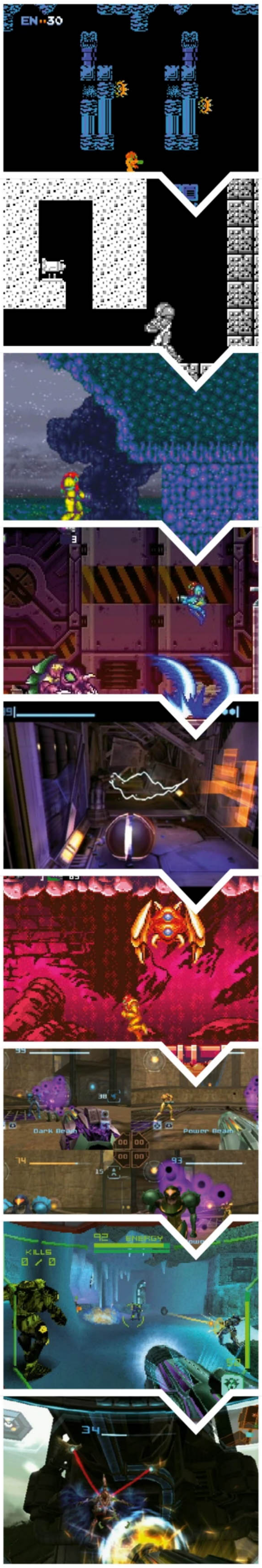


» Zebes was an atmospheric setting, with a variety of environments given life by the new SNES hardware.



» The iconic Morph Ball has its roots in the lo-fi NES's inability to convincingly animate a crawling Samus.

Series highlights



Metroid

(FDS/NES/GBA – 1986)

The *Metroid* series was born on disk, not cartridge. It began life as this 1986-vintage Famicom Disk System title before migrating to the silicon of NES carts for consumption in the West. Videogames' first internationally famous heroine was born here. (An emulated version can be found in the GameCube release of *Metroid Prime*.)

Metroid II: Return Of Samus

(Game Boy – 1992)

This monochrome curio transported Samus to the Metroid homeworld of SR388, its dramatic finale providing Sakamoto and team with a bridge into the events of *Super Metroid*. It may not be as pretty as its relatives, but *Return Of Samus* remains an essential experience for the family's admirers.

Super Metroid

(SNES – 1994)

Arguably the finest game in the *Metroid* series, this 16-bit creation brought 2D adventure gaming to a new level of sophistication. *Super Metroid*'s pacing and world design are by all measures perfect, and there are so many aspects to explore here that the game retains its unique allure 15 years on.

Metroid Fusion

(GBA – 2002)

Taking the *Super Metroid* template into the 21st Century, and again with Yoshio Sakamoto at the creative helm, *Metroid Fusion* found Samus once more facing the destruction of a game world. Only this time Samus was the knowing perpetrator.

Metroid Prime

(GameCube – 2002)

Retro Studios' first-person adventure spin on the *Metroid* template sold 1.5 million copies in the United States alone, yet it simultaneously pushed Samus Aran away from Japanese sensibilities, guaranteeing a future of Western success at the cost of *Metroid*'s Japanese heritage. *Prime*'s unusual perspective and restrained style of first-person play carved out a niche for Samus in the next generation, cleverly sidestepping the FPS genre to find new ground.

Metroid: Zero Mission

(GBA – 2004)

Zero Mission's retelling of the first *Metroid* game brought with it a *Fusion*-standard graphical upgrade. By this stage Samus's popularity in her homeland was at an all-time low, and sales didn't reach six figures in Japan; a shame, as *Zero Mission* was even better than the FDS original.

Metroid Prime 2: Echoes

(GameCube – 2004)

The first *Metroid* game to feature a multiplayer mode, although its inclusion was perhaps ill-advised, as it failed to really add anything of worth to the traditional single-player adventure. *Echoes*' greatest successes were in translating more of Samus's abilities to a 3D context.

Metroid Prime: Hunters

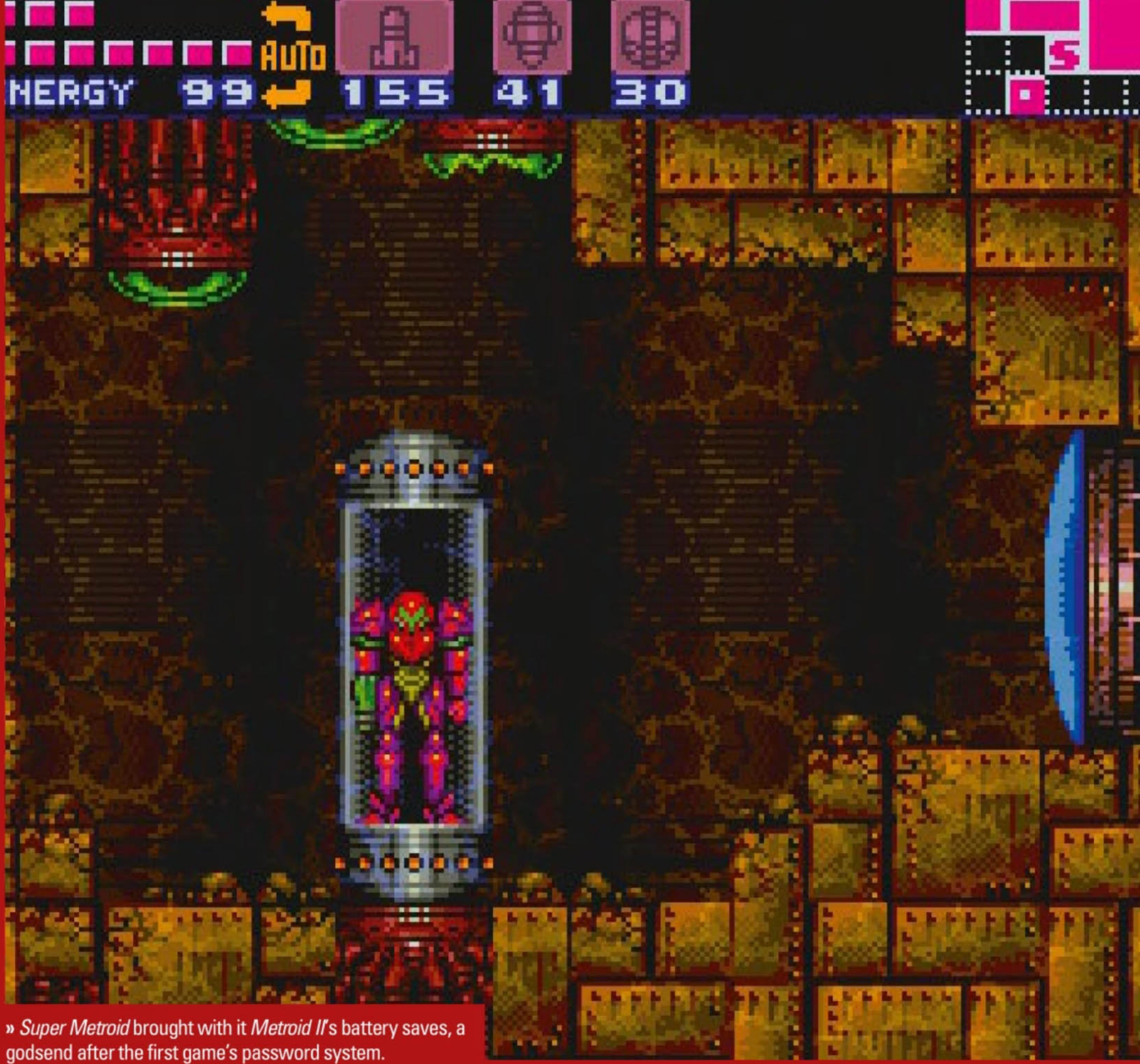
(DS – 2006)

Developed by NST, the outfit behind titles such as *Ridge Racer 64* and *Wave Race: Blue Storm*, *Hunters* was one of the better first-person DS games, with a multiplayer mode that felt more natural than that of *Echoes*. However, compared with joypad-controlled *Metroid* predecessors, *Hunters*' touch-screen controls resulted in a slightly lower-than-average level of overall satisfaction.

Metroid Prime 3: Corruption

(Wii – 2007)

The final release in the *Prime* trilogy effectively brought the modern *Metroid* experience closer in line with the FPS genre, combining Remote-directed shooting and relentless action.



» *Super Metroid* brought with it *Metroid II*'s battery saves, a godsend after the first game's password system.

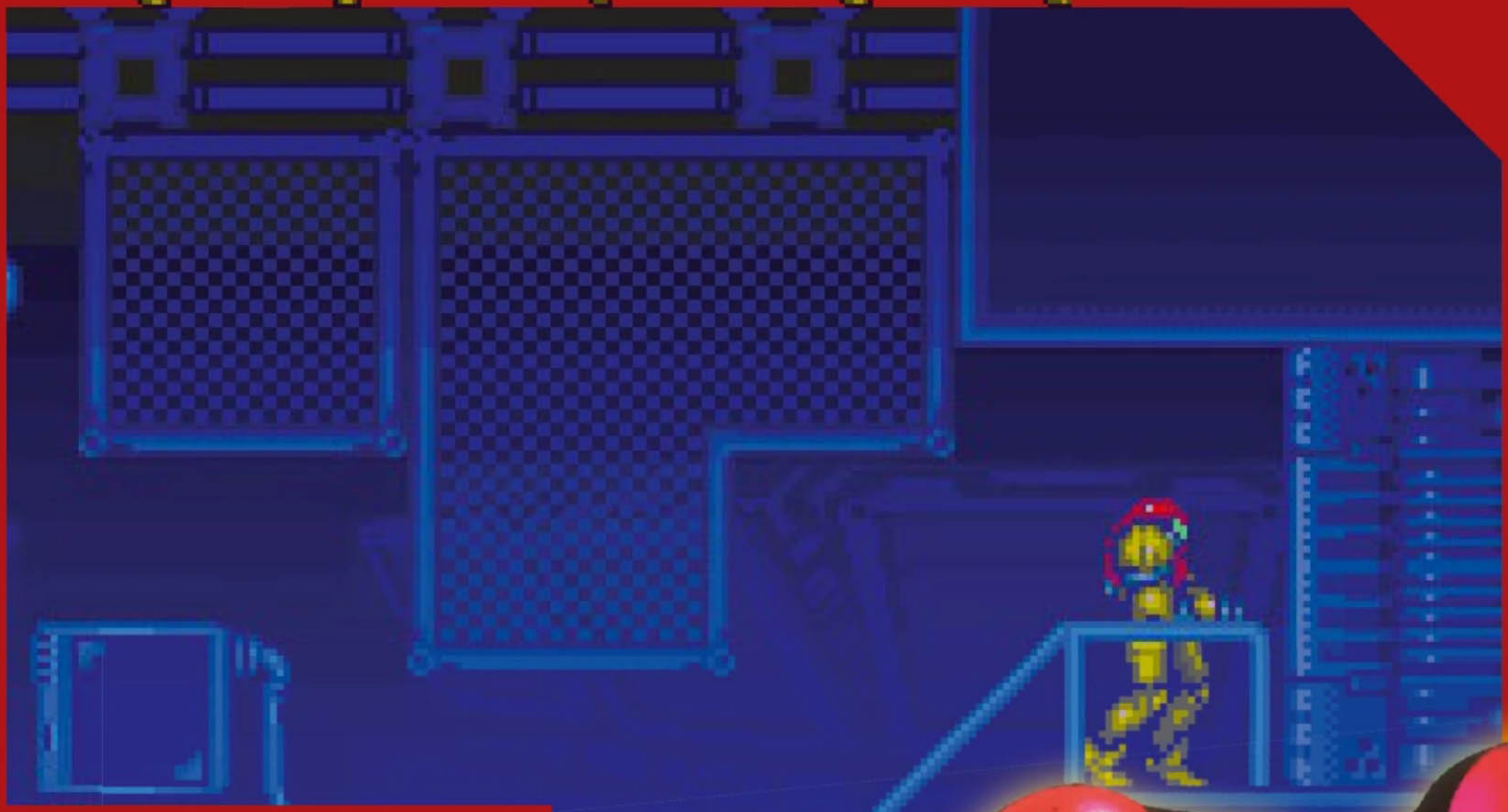
the code on that million-selling disk also plotted the aesthetic direction of the series. I suggest to Sakamoto-san that *Super Metroid* and the *Metroid* games in general don't look like 'typical' NCL games and I ask him why that might be. He sips his tea and then replies: "I think the film *Alien* had a huge influence on the production of the first *Metroid* game. All of the team members were affected by HR Giger's design work, and I think they were aware that such designs would be a good match for the *Metroid* world we had already put in place. To be honest, I've never really been clear on what is or isn't the 'Nintendo look', but as far as we were concerned, we were just projecting another image from within Nintendo – another face of Nintendo, if you like. But yes, it's a science-fiction game, so…"

Other than the artistic influence of Necronom, Sakamoto reckons that numerous games affected the style of *Super Metroid* – "I can't list them… There are just too many of them" – although he counters this by highlighting the experimental side of his team's early work: "For the prototype stage of *Super Metroid*'s development we just had a few Intelligent Systems programming staff, myself, and another [in-house] Nintendo designer. We examined what was possible in the game, and as the core *Metroid* system was already in place we considered how we could make the game easier to play, what new ideas we could incorporate, and so on… Then we drafted in lots of other NCL and IntSys developers once we got beyond that stage and into the proper work."

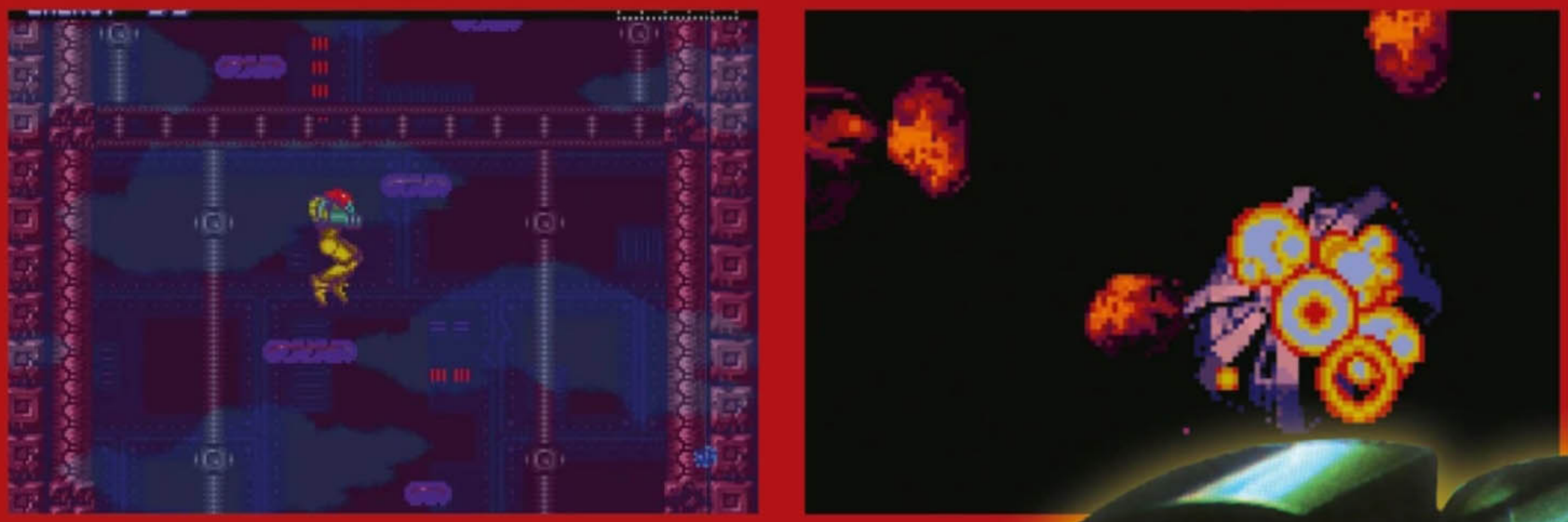
There has always been a complex yet mutually beneficial relationship between Nintendo, then based in Higashiyama (to the northeast of the current Minami location), and Intelligent Systems, constantly situated in the eastern Kyoto ward of Higashiyama. Sakamoto refers to the team as "IntSys" and says that it had been helping Nintendo with the *Metroid* series since the initial FDS game, "as a second-party developer". While it's fair to say that the game design and play-testing abilities of NCL's in-house staff have always been some of the world's best, Intelligent Systems' developers were on hand to provide indispensable technical know-how, particularly focused on the hardware side of things.

"IntSys has always been very capable with hardware," Sakamoto adds, "so during the experimental stage we told the IntSys programmers what kinds of things we wanted to do and verified what in reality could be done. We'd been well prepared for the move to the Super Famicom hardware, so we had some idea of what to expect before we went into it; which features we should use, and how. I think it was good that we went through the prototype stage because it gave us a base onto which the post-

> **"The nap room wasn't being cleaned at all. One morning staff woke us up and told us that the room smelled like a zoo"**



» The open-ended gameplay meant that *Super Metroid* has become popular for speed runs.



» *Super Metroid* used the full range of special effects available to the SNES for its bosses and environments.

experimental stage staffers could easily begin their work. At the time, the SFC was reputed to be difficult to develop for. Depending on how you partitioned the Super Famicom's video RAM, which looked after the sorting of image information, the scope of possibilities would change wildly. Knowing that you could diminish the VRAM's potential by poor partitioning was useful information, because it meant we could think about how certain things could or couldn't be achieved, and how we could work around those limitations. As we were migrating from the Famicom to Super Famicom, really everyone – not just Nintendo but other developers too – seemed to be having fun testing the feature set of the new hardware. That went for us, too: I remember often thinking, 'Oh, I had no idea we could even do this!' The graphics and sound were fantastic, but we were still driven by wanting to [not] be outdone by the arcade games of the time."

To a man, the developers supplied by IntSys to work on *Super Metroid* were all programmers. In spite of the various backgrounds of the *Super Metroid* team, there was apparently no NCL-IntSys rivalry; no factions, just harmony and productive co-operation. Key team members from the Nintendo side included Makoto Kanoh, the producer, the guy who instigated the project; my interviewee, Yoshio Sakamoto, who was the director in charge of game design; and Tomomi Yamane, who was the figure Sakamoto regards as having been the 'main' designer: "He was very skilled and was particularly interested in the hardware stuff, consulting with the IntSys people as to what kind of images could be displayed."

Even though the team's objective was to build on the success of *Metroid* and *Metroid II*, only three of the original *Metroid* team, including Sakamoto himself, worked on *Super Metroid*: "The rest of the [NCL side] was made up of young trainee developers," he recalls. "Of course young people can be quite impertinent – and those on the *Super Metroid* team certainly were – but I think that's quite important in a way. These young people had enough about them to help us a lot. There were many different personalities in the *Super Metroid* team, which was a good thing. It was a harsh development environment, so I'm sure that some of the staff didn't enjoy the work, but generally the team was full of the 'Let's go for it!' spirit. I think that was partly because of the timing as well, what with the Super Famicom pushing everything to the next level."

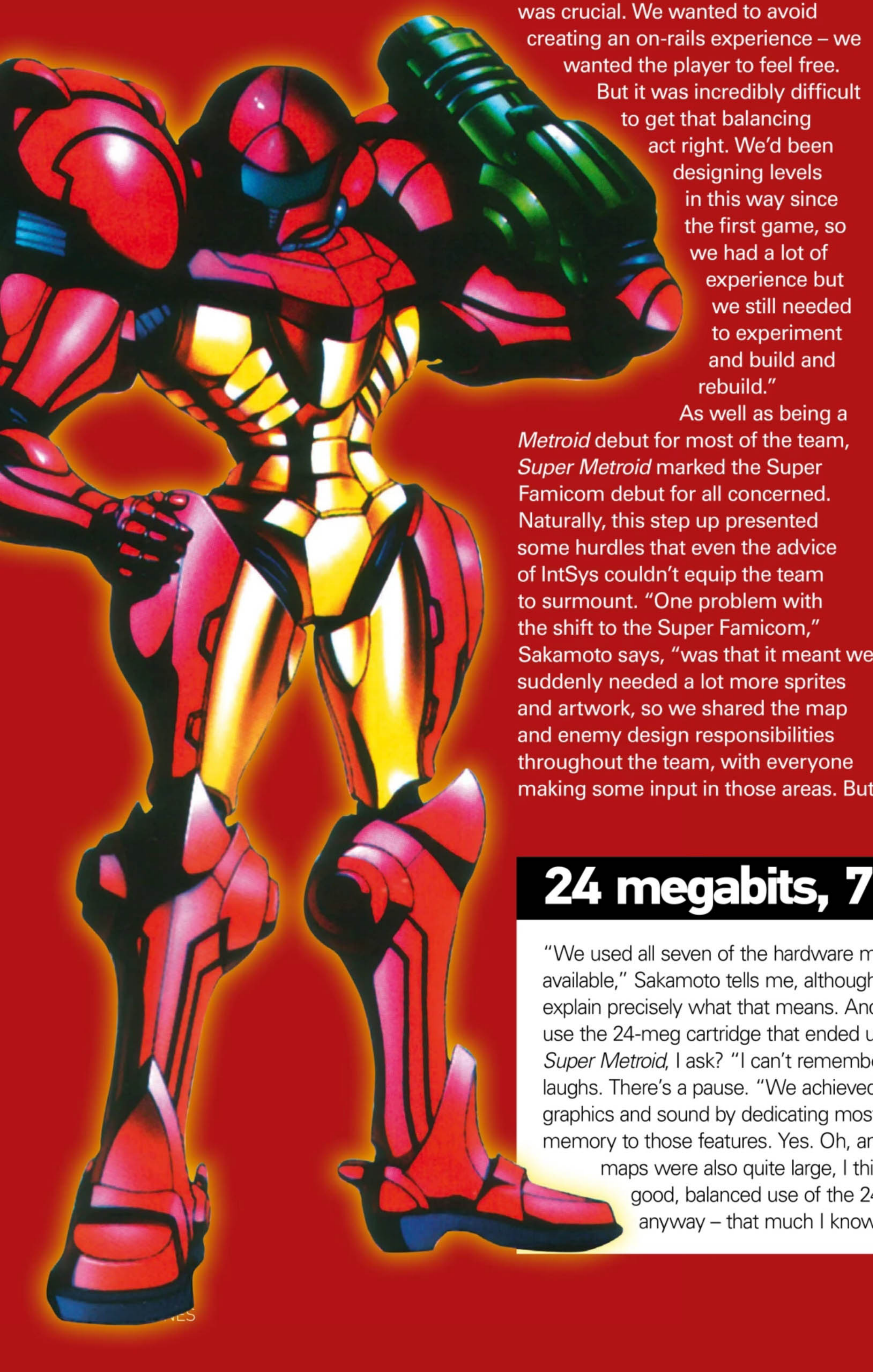
The "next level" wasn't merely the notion of advanced graphics and sound: it was also a matter of the expansion and improvement of level design. However, Sakamoto and team were reluctant to drag *Super Metroid* into the realm of storytelling methods utilised by RPGs and other adventure games. "We really didn't want to explain things to the player using too many words," Sakamoto states. "We just wanted to let them play and be able to work things out for themselves. For example, say there's a mechanism where you need to climb up a ladder and place a bomb there in order to advance, as one component in the solution of a [gameplay] riddle; if that was all you needed to do in order to get through to the next area, you'd miss all of the other mechanisms we'd put in place and wouldn't even realise that certain parts of the game existed. We wanted players to explore everything we'd made and then move on. That's why we designed the maps in such a way that the player couldn't escape without exploration, or in such a way that the player would end up back at a starting point before advancing. The player would be cornered/driven and would eventually be forced to stop and say, 'Right, how should I think about this area?' That's the essential point of *Super Metroid*'s map design. Not using words meant

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DONKEY KONG JR
SYSTEM: ARCADE, FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM/NES, ETC
YEAR: 1982

KID ICARUS (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: FDS/NES, GBA
YEAR: 1986

METROID
SYSTEM: FDS/NES, GBA
YEAR: 1986



that the player had to 'feel' his/her way through the game – and that's how we wanted it to be. When they discovered something new – a new item or new location – we wanted the player to feel that he/she had made that discovery independently, without help from the game."

R&D1 went to great pains to achieve the fine balance seen in *Super Metroid*'s item locations, puzzles, boss encounters, and in Samus's acquired abilities and inventory use. It wasn't simply the case that everything fell into position at the first attempt at design either, as Sakamoto reveals: "In a stage following on from an area where the player made lots of discoveries, we'd hold back from pushing the player too far in order to avoid repetition. Balance between difficulty level and player discoveries was crucial. We wanted to avoid creating an on-rails experience – we wanted the player to feel free. But it was incredibly difficult to get that balancing act right. We'd been designing levels in this way since the first game, so we had a lot of experience but we still needed to experiment and build and rebuild."

As well as being a *Metroid* debut for most of the team, *Super Metroid* marked the Super Famicom debut for all concerned. Naturally, this step up presented some hurdles that even the advice of IntSys couldn't equip the team to surmount. "One problem with the shift to the Super Famicom," Sakamoto says, "was that it meant we suddenly needed a lot more sprites and artwork, so we shared the map and enemy design responsibilities throughout the team, with everyone making some input in those areas. But then doing that resulted in a complete mishmash of styles because of each designer's individual preference, so in the end I had to ask Yamane to retouch everything that had been submitted, bringing it all together as one consistent design."

Remarkably, there was no friction within the team even during the frenzied last stage of development, although there was something of a bad smell: "During the final six months of development I didn't know where I lived any more; the Nintendo building – not here, but the old place [in Higashiyama] – became like a boarding house for the *Super Metroid* team," Sakamoto grins. "It got to the stage where I really don't remember going home at all! There was a nap room where it was okay to sleep, but sometimes it was full [of sleeping, overworked *Super Metroid* staff] – those were the worst times, when I wanted to sleep but couldn't, and I didn't have time to go home! There were always between ten and fifteen of us in the office through the night, so we had to take naps in turns. The nap room wasn't being cleaned or looked after at all, because we were always using it; one morning staff from another area came to wake us up and told us that the room smelled like a zoo. Another Nintendo employee put a room freshener in the nap room, but that only made the place pong even worse. Everyone in Nintendo gave us funny looks," Sakamoto laughs. "It's quite sad having only these kinds of memories!"

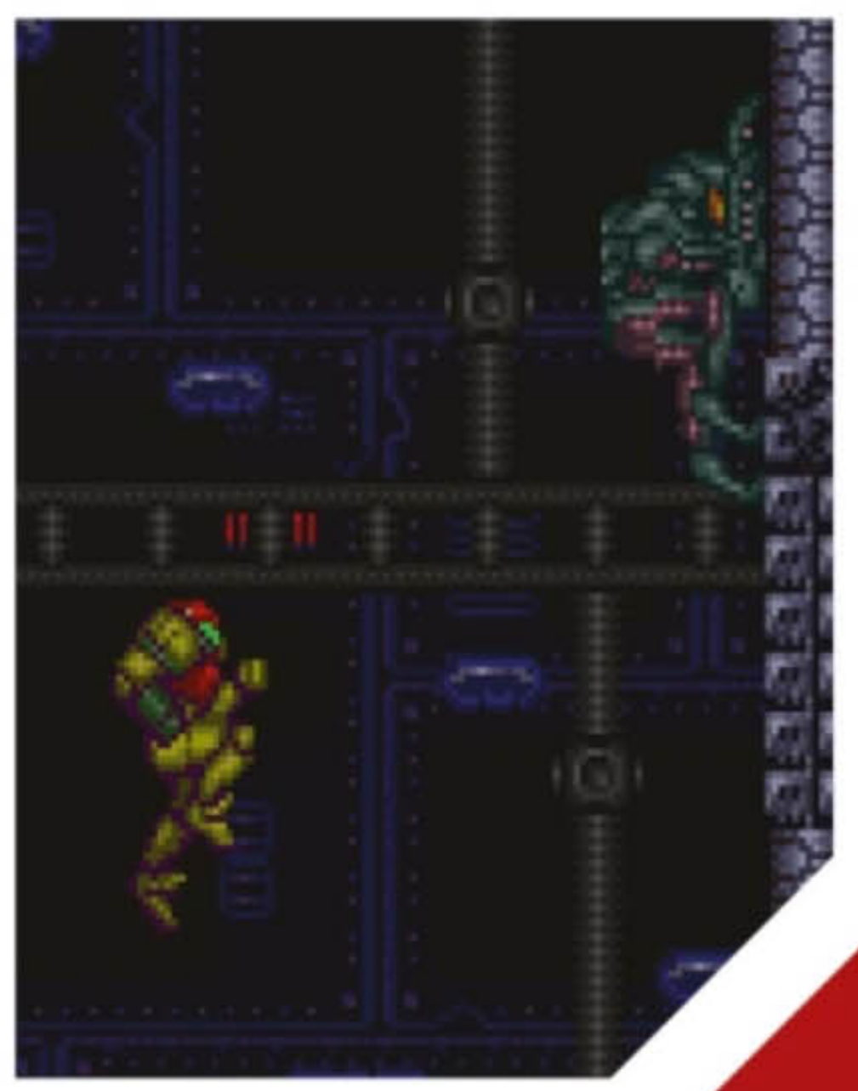
> **"We didn't want to explain things to the player. We wanted to let them be able to work things out for themselves"**

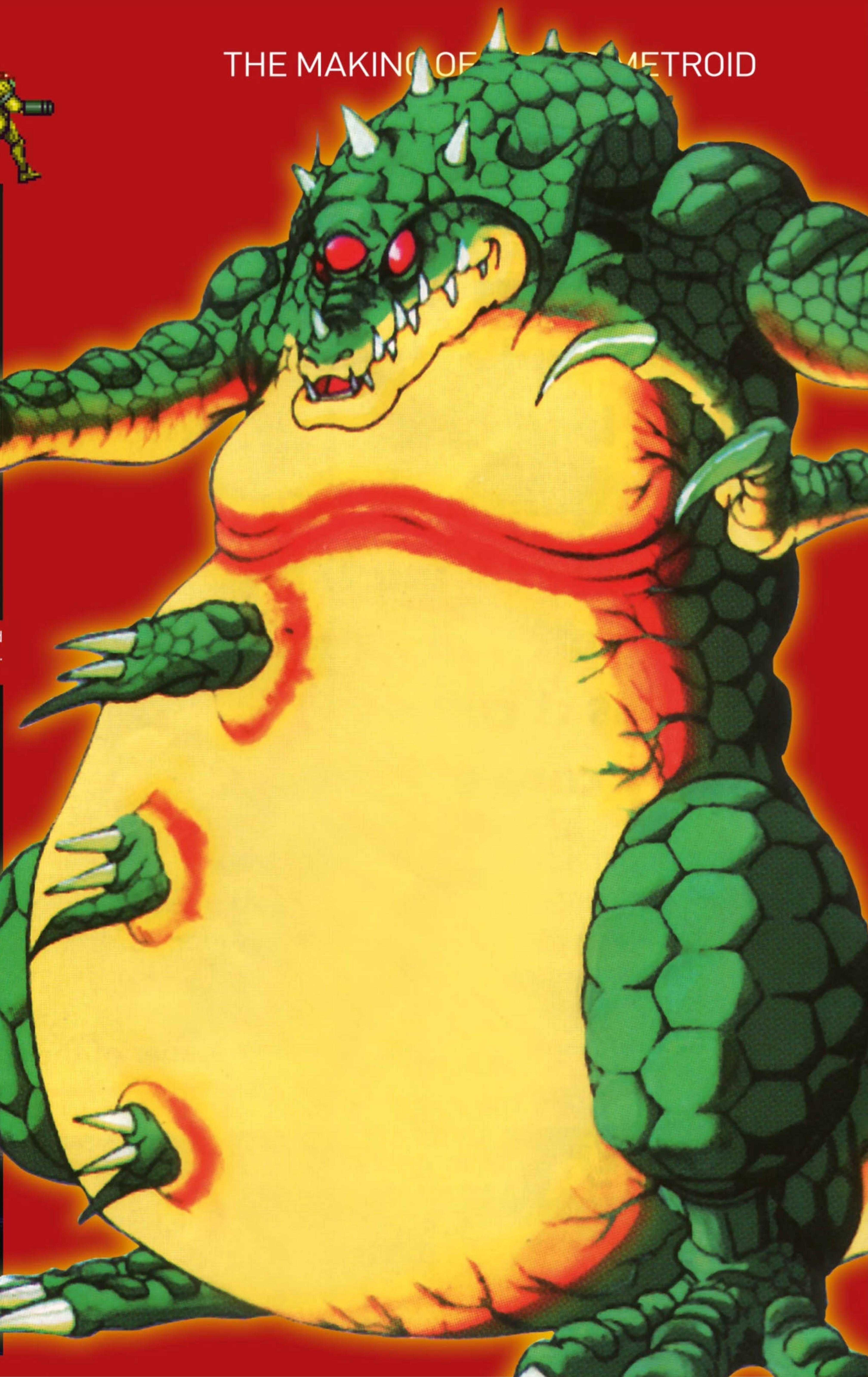
Our talk soon takes a turn from development room stench to the wrath of a Nintendo demigod: Gunpei Yokoi. In his early 50s at the time of *Super Metroid*'s production, Yokoi was the game's general project manager but did not exercise any hands-on control. Sakamoto remembers how his superior viewed *Super Metroid*: "Yokoi-san, who at the time was my section chief and who always had fresh ideas, was always angry when he saw us all completely absorbed and working crazy overtime on *Super Metroid*. He came in and said, 'Are you lot trying to produce a work of art or something?' [Laughs] But this was an epic and we were already way past our deadline, and it seemed we were getting progressively further from our objectives – Yokoi-san was becoming angrier with us day by day during that period. We weren't aware of it, but Kanoh was given a warning by Yokoi-san. Although he was really unhappy with us, and even though he wasn't the type to dish out praise, Yokoi-san was constantly playing *Super Metroid* once we'd finished it – he was hooked. He was playing it so much that I wondered what he was up to. [Laughs] When other developers brought their action games to Nintendo, he'd always compare them with *Super Metroid* and invariably ended up recommending the third-party developer to 'go away and play *Super Metroid*'. That's how fond he was of our game. I suppose this is a better memory than the smelly nap room anecdote," Sakamoto laughs.

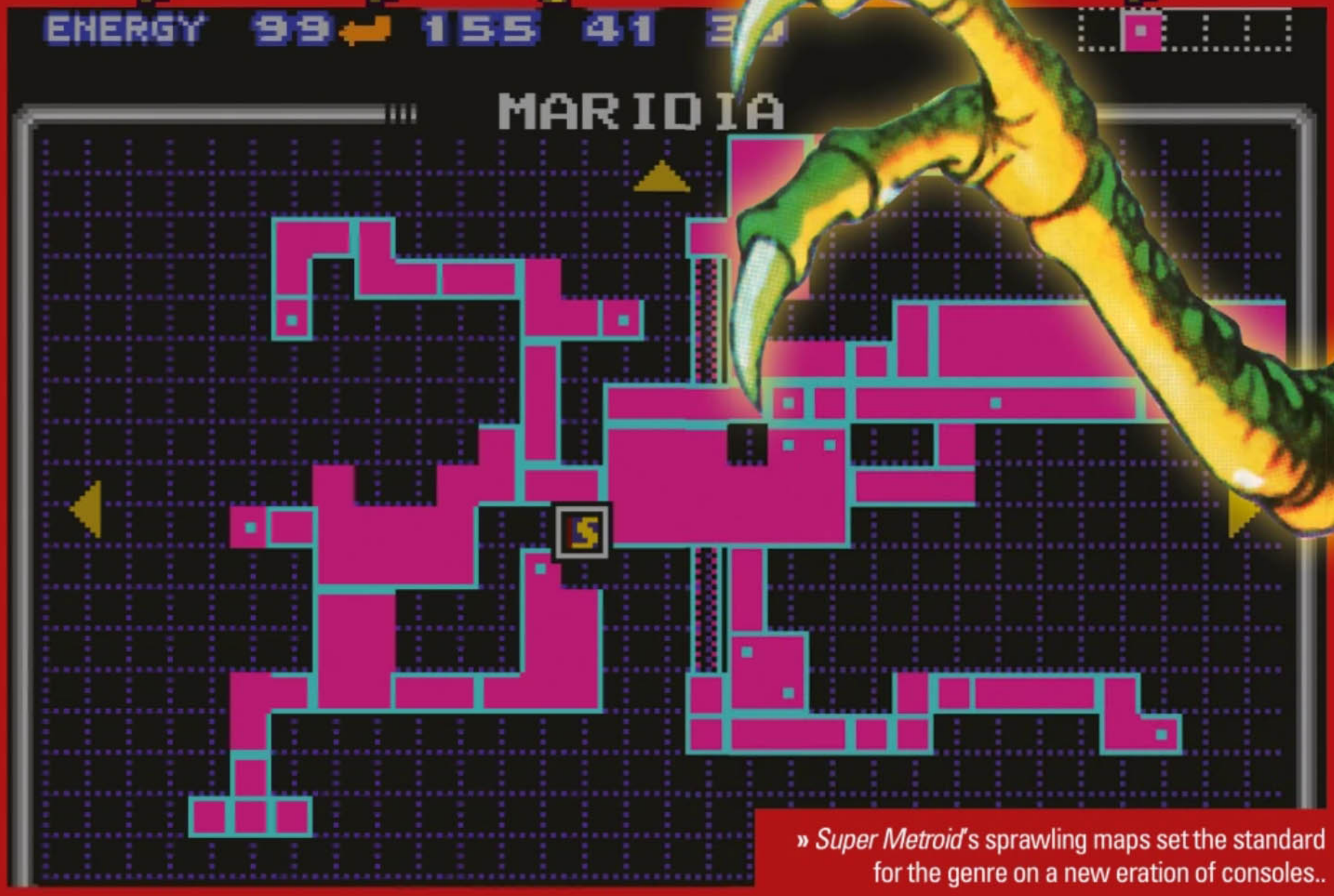
"*Super Metroid* was released in '94," he continues, "and development had taken us between two and three years. I don't know how it was perceived throughout the company, but the timing was such that all teams were focused on putting out lots of new SFC games, so there was obviously some expectation that we deliver with *Super Metroid*. We definitely had a lot of support and understanding of the game's concept from people related with the project, and that helped to ensure that we did a good job." Which, as everyone who has played the classic game will quickly attest, is a monumental understatement indeed.

24 megabits, 7 modes

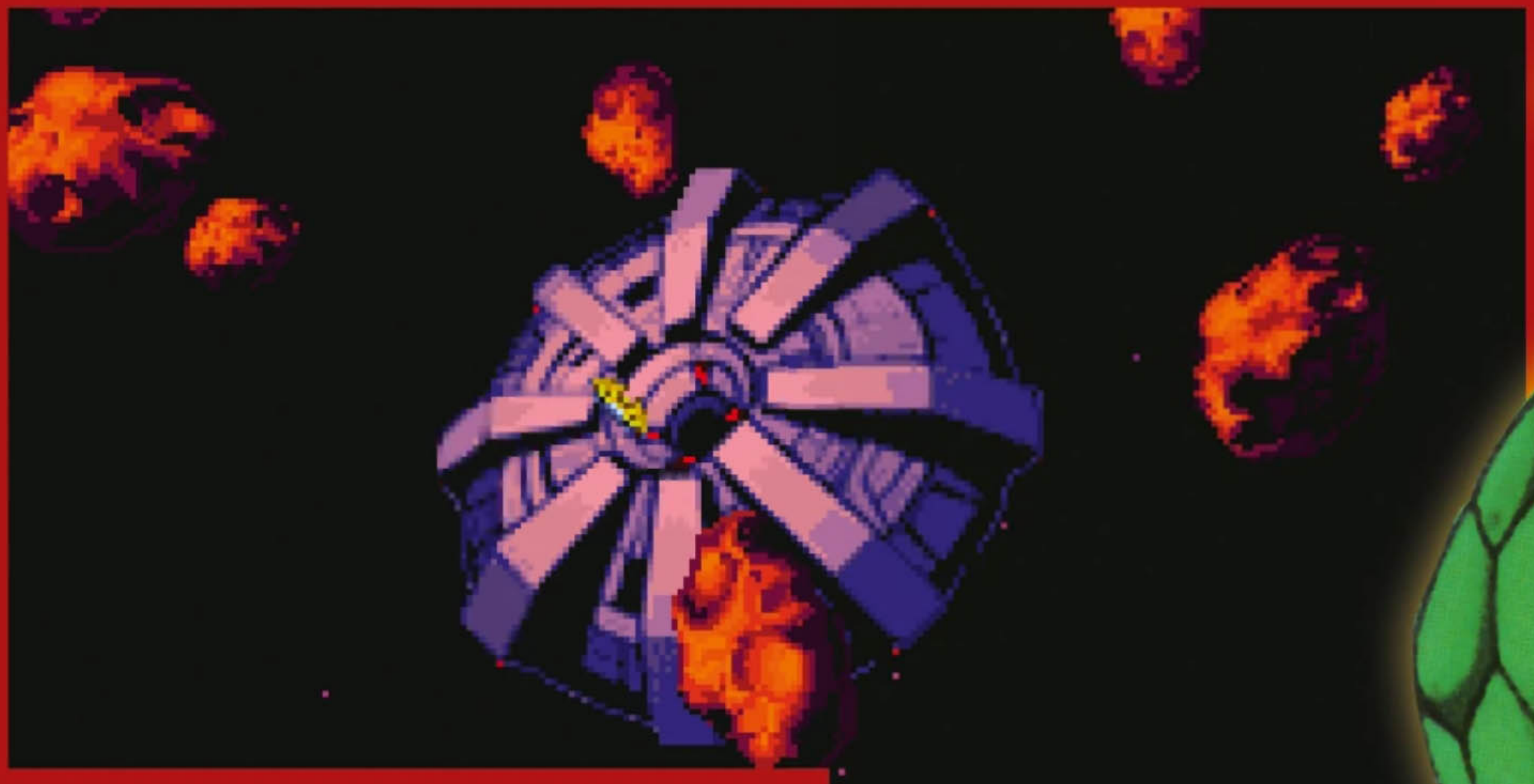
"We used all seven of the hardware modes available," Sakamoto tells me, although he doesn't explain precisely what that means. And how did you use the 24-meg cartridge that ended up housing *Super Metroid*, I ask? "I can't remember!" Sakamoto laughs. There's a pause. "We achieved wonderful graphics and sound by dedicating most of the memory to those features. Yes. Oh, and the game's maps were also quite large, I think. We made good, balanced use of the 24 megabits, anyway – that much I know for sure."



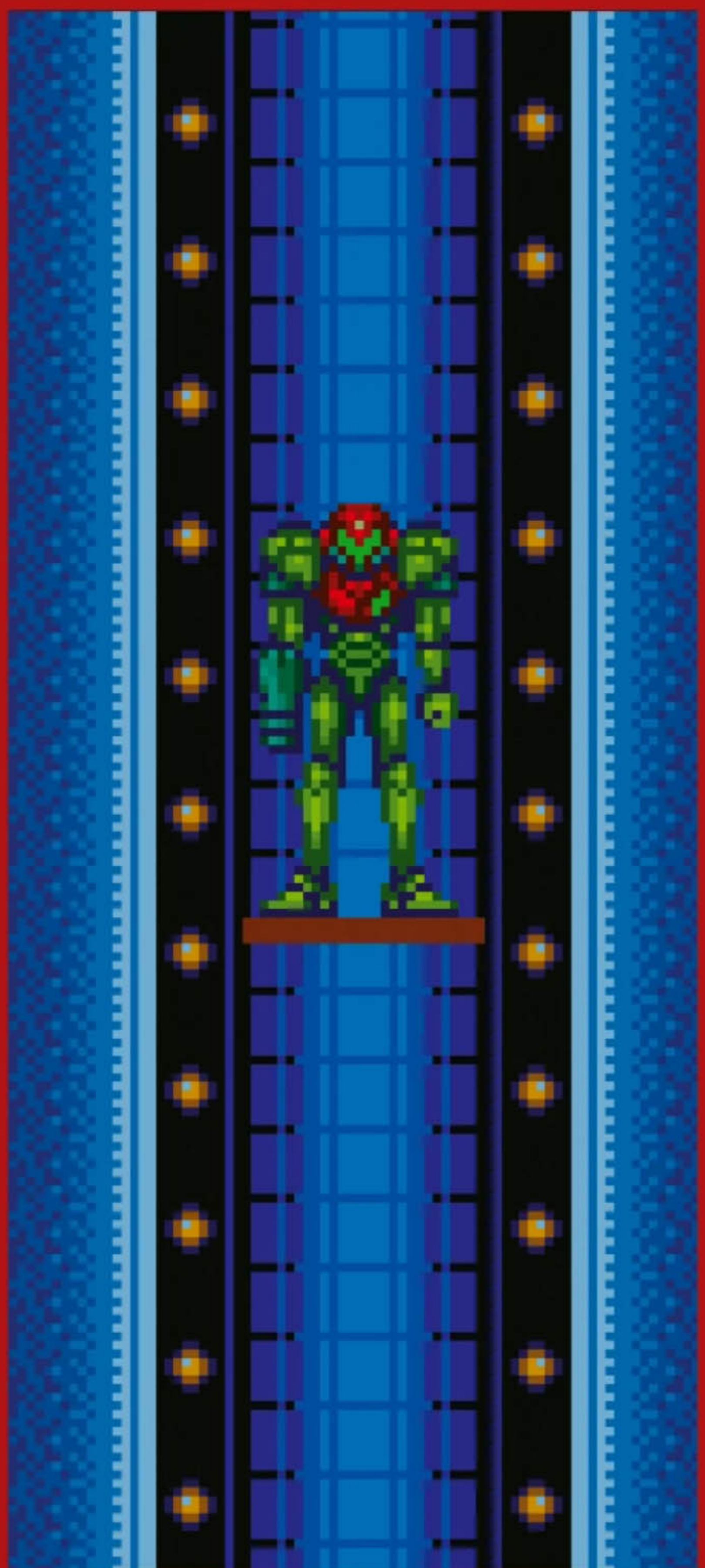




» *Super Metroid*'s sprawling maps set the standard for the genre on a new eration of consoles..

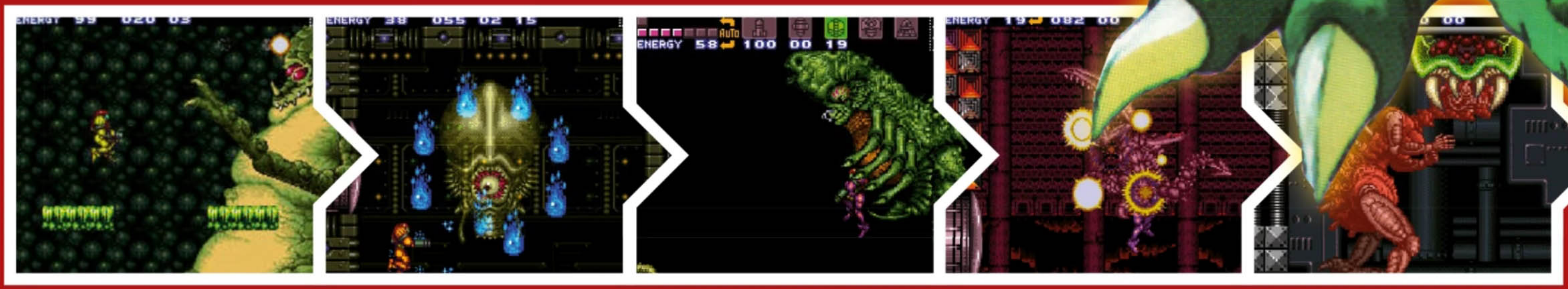


» The last-minute escape from the self-destructing space station has become a familiar opening for *Metroid* games.



» The way in which new abilities open up new areas has been often copied since *Super Metroid*'s release.

ENERGY 94 007



The big bosses

Kraid
This first major boss character is literally a monster: he probably missed out on a role in the Chewits adverts purely because he was overqualified. Kraid's weak point is his gob, although he uses his whole being to launch quasi-organic thorns and fireballs in Samus' direction.

Phantoon
A good example of the Super Famicom hardware's transparency effects, Phantoon at times appears to be an apparition; this boss's trick is to flit between protected translucency and a devastatingly powerful solid state, and he likes to launch endless rounds of flaming blue orbs.

Draygon
This yellow-bellied, oversized crustacean is more than just a simple typo. Draygon is a mean swimmer, and its weak points are protected by the shell of a giant lobster. Slightly perversely, *Super Metroid* encourages you to vanquish Draygon by electrocuting it until its flesh turns purple.

Ridley
An homage – in name alone, obviously – to *Alien* director Ridley Scott, whose film was a major inspiration to the series, this senior Space Pirate appears once at the start of *Super Metroid* and again, in more powerful – yet paradoxically more vulnerable – form, towards the end of the game.

Mother Brain
The enigmatic final boss of *Super Metroid* is essentially a lump of deskulled brain. However, Mother Brain protects itself with dynamic weapons and the glass casing of a robo-suit, and when that fails, it connects to the neck of a bio-mechanical bodysuit. Afterwards, Samus again has to run for her life.

SNES Controller

» PLATFORM: SNES **»RELEASED:** 1990 **»COST:** £7 (UNBOXED) / £10 (BOXED)

Nintendo started the trend towards joypads with the release of the Famicom, and the design for its follow-up proved similarly influential. When the Super Famicom launched In Japan in 1990, it would introduce a variety of now-standard features to the console joypad. The first of these was the addition of shoulder buttons – two long buttons mounted on the top edge of the pad, rather than its face. The L and R buttons were designed for your index fingers to rest on while holding the pad, enabling quick access. The other change was the face button layout – four buttons in a diamond formation, with X and Y joining A and B. The pad also followed in the footsteps of Sega's Mega Drive controller by featuring a rounded body, showing a concession to ergonomics that hadn't been present in the Famicom and NES pads.

Shoulder buttons quickly caught on, becoming a standard feature of console joypads by the 32-bit generation, but the diamond formation of four face buttons took a little longer to become standard as companies (including Nintendo) experimented with different six-button layouts. However, all major consoles and dedicated gaming handhelds use it now – and all owe a debt to the SNES pad.

Nintendo
SUPER NINTEND

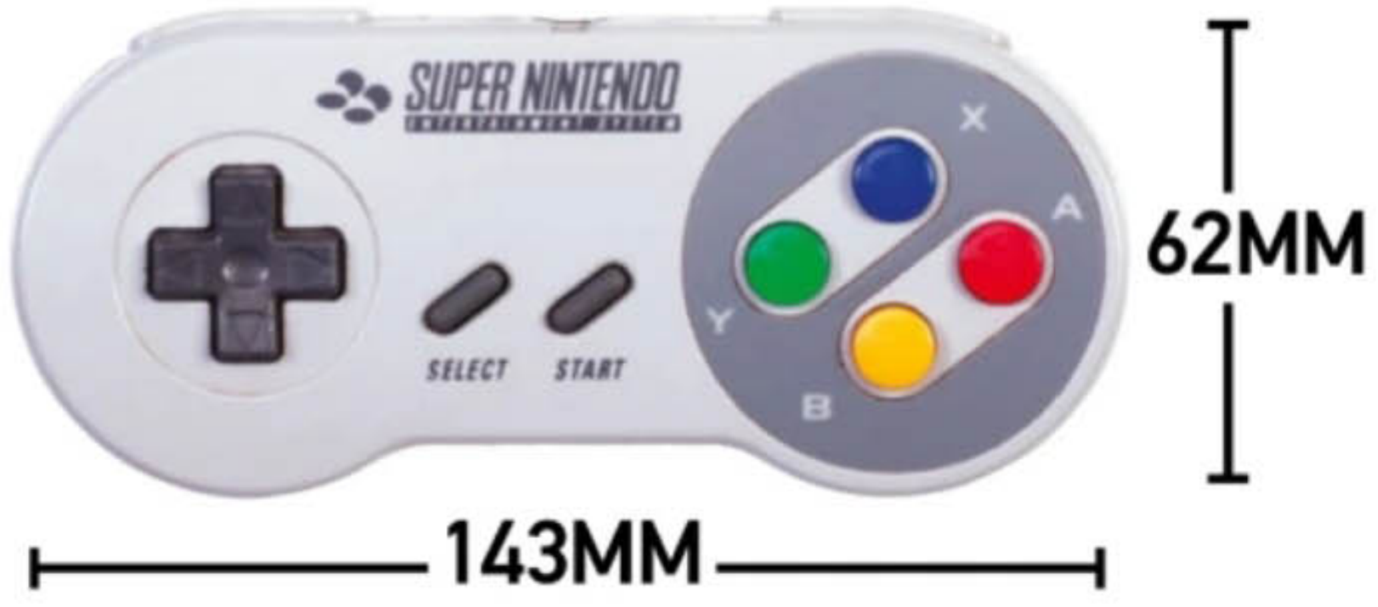
EDITOR'S CHOICE F-Zero

This futuristic racing game made a perfect case for the SNES pad's layout right from the launch of the system, by offering a control scheme that would be impossible on any other control pad available at the time. As well as the standard acceleration, brake and steering controls expected of a racing game, *F-Zero* added a turbo function on the A button. However, the best addition was the ability to lean your craft with the shoulder buttons, intuitively using L and R buttons to add extra cornering power or provide lateral movement in the appropriate direction.

20300
RANK
SAFE
.5
2
POWER
SPEED 265 km/h
R1
1'54"01
CHECK
2
888

SNES controller fact

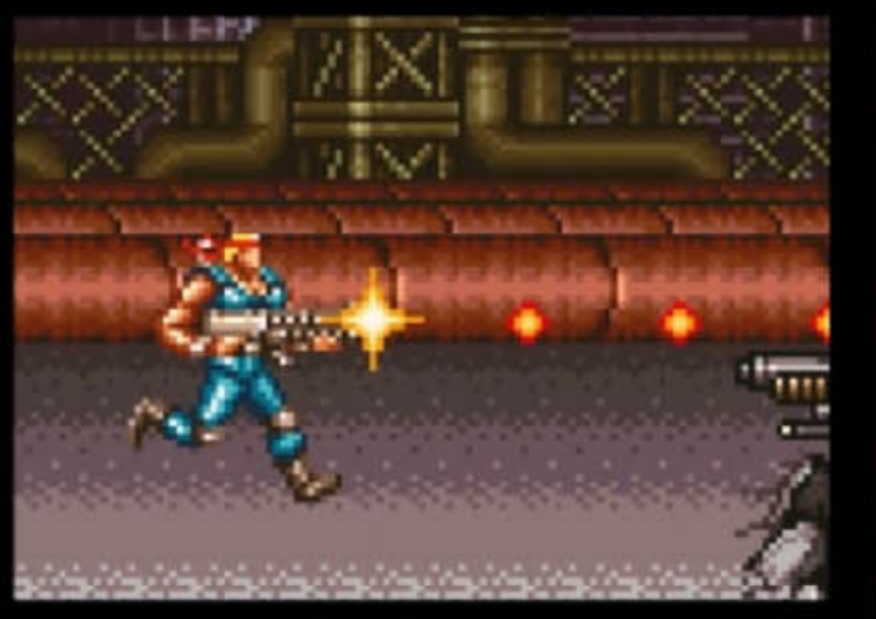
■ Rather than creating its own controller connection standard for the CPS Changer arcade system, Capcom opted to include SNES control ports. Of course, the company hoped you'd use its controllers rather than standard SNES pads…



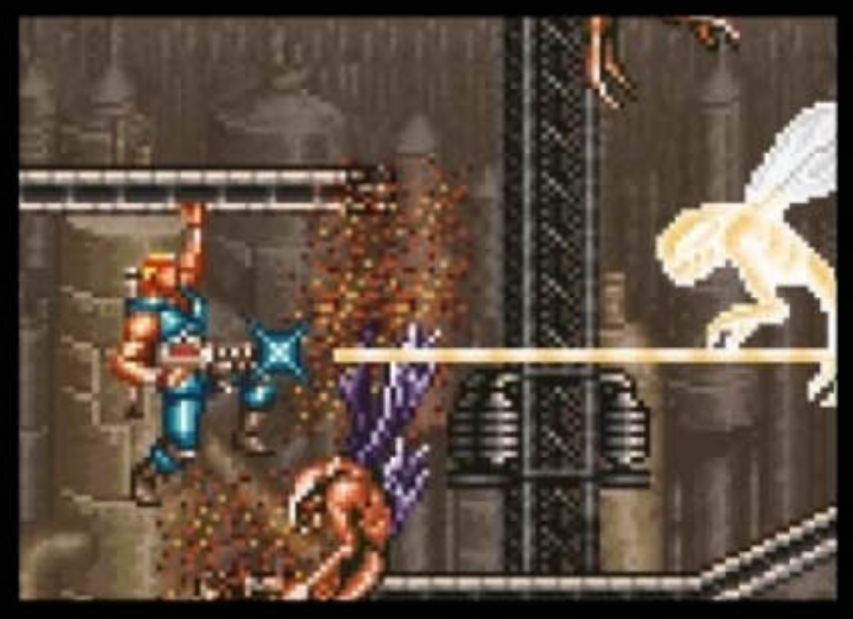
CONTRA III THE ALIEN WARS

It's without doubt one of the greatest Super Nintendo games of all time, one of the best games in the *Contra* series, and also one of the finest run-and-gun games ever. Oh, and did we mention that it's one of the best games ever too? That it took us 89 issues to finally give *Contra III* a classic game analysis is somewhat strange, but the reason lies in the fact that the game is so exceptional that we assumed we already had. A masterclass in pacing, set pieces and basically great level design, from the very minute you start *Contra III* to the sweaty, jubilation-filled second you beat it on the hardest setting and see the game's ending, the action is relentless, the challenge high and the gameplay intense. The year is 2636, and Stuart Hunt is helping two commandos, Sully and Jimbo, win an epic alien war.

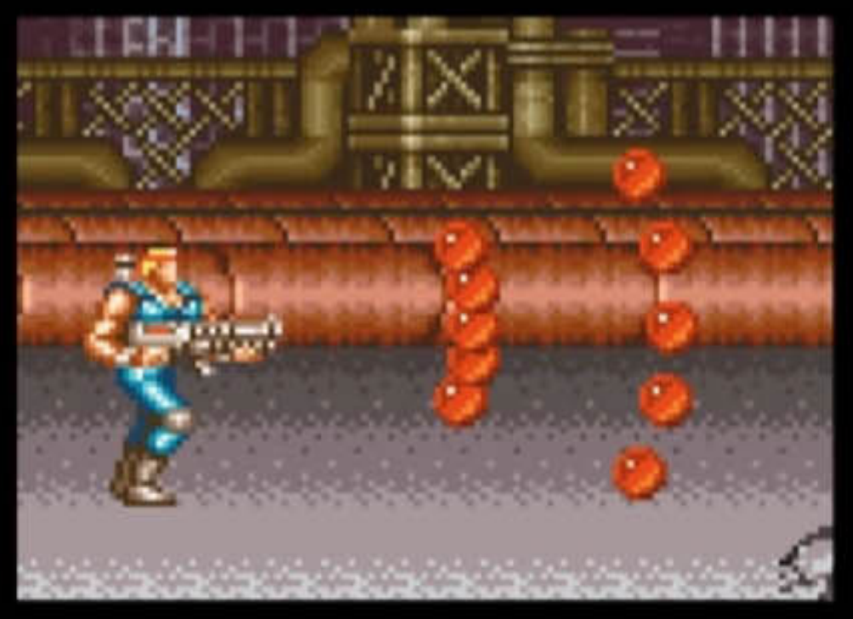
THE ARMOURY



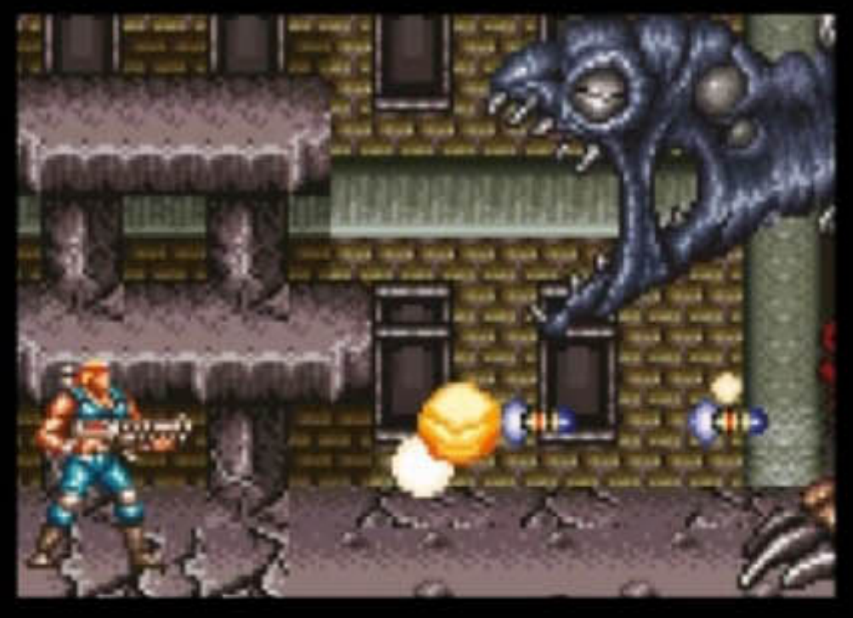
Machine gun
The default weapon in the game. It's pretty powerful and really quite effective at taking out much that the game throws at you.



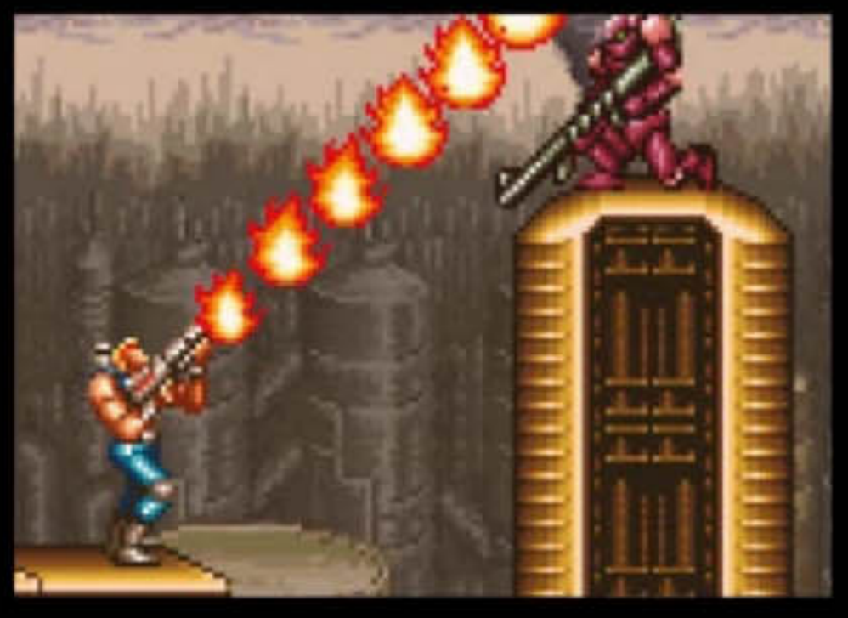
Laser
As laser-based weapons do, this fires a concentrated line of powerful radiation. It's highly powerful, but using it requires a good aim.



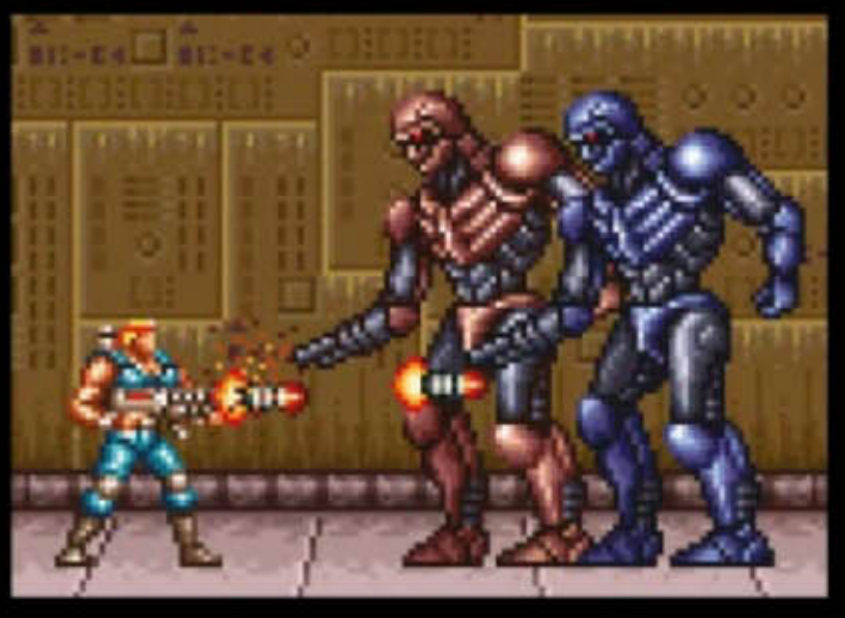
Spread gun
Though the weakest weapon in the game, the spread gun makes short work of enemies attacking from different heights.



Crush missiles
Blue in colour, these are the most powerful weapons in the game. They explode on contact, and are really effective against bosses.



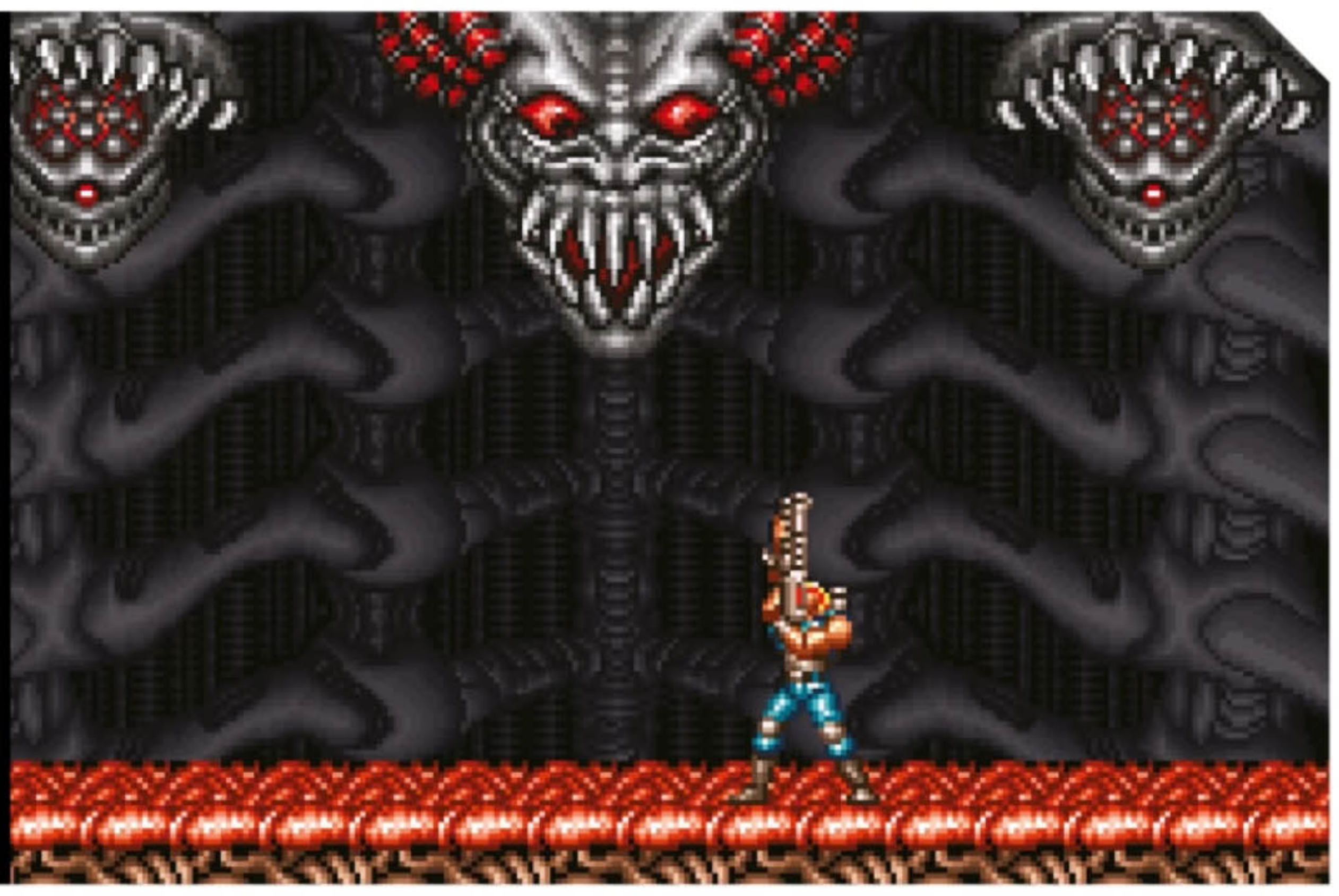
Flamethrower
The flamethrower is an effective close-quarters combat tool that is great for taking down bosses and cindering weak spots.



Homing missiles
Moderately powerful homing missiles will hunt enemies down. It's a really effective weapon against the airborne aliens.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

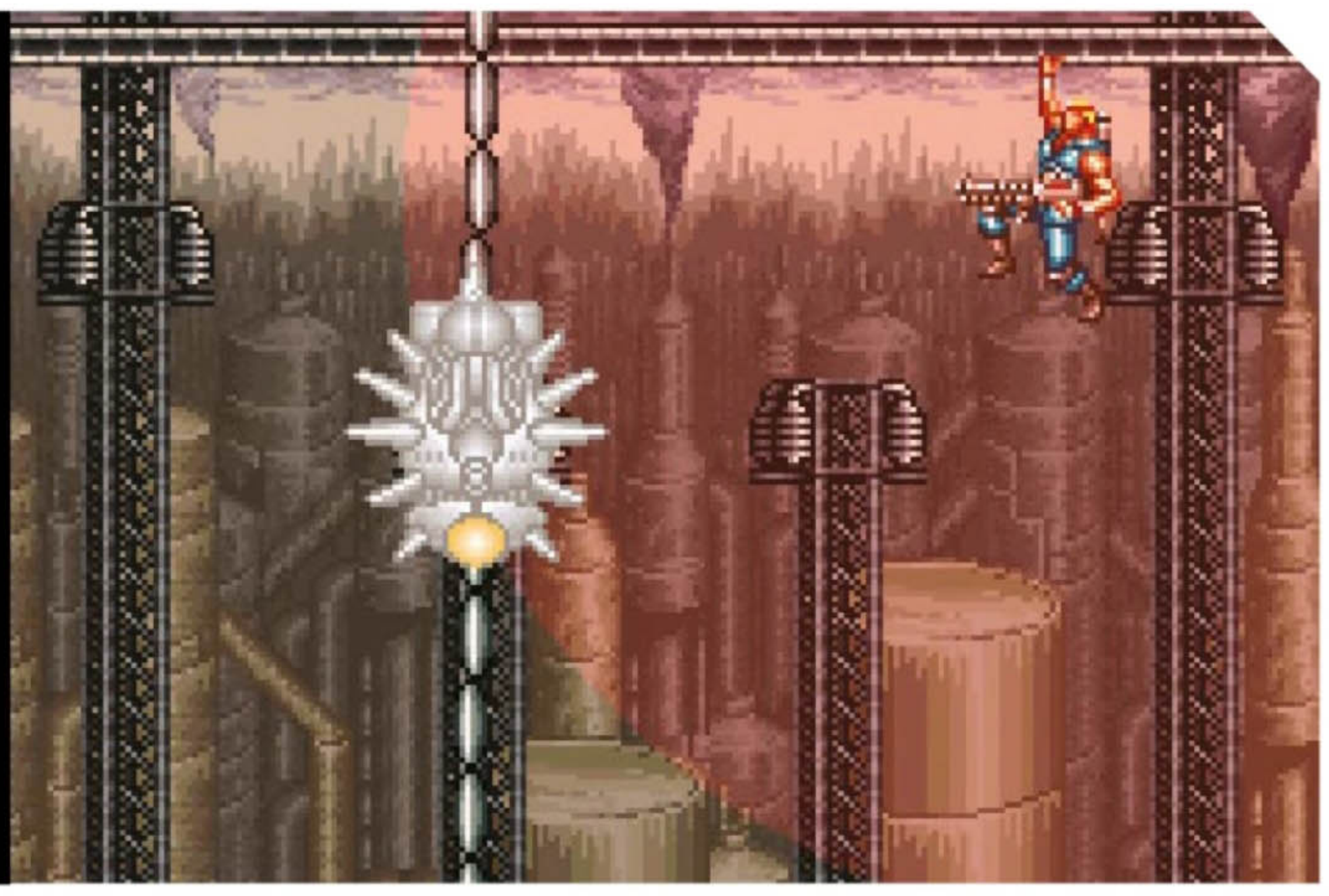
WHY IT'S A CLASSIC



Contra just got better

The original *Contra* reinvented the run-and-gun genre, introducing many elements that countless games adopted. The follow-ups prior to *Contra III* offered a decent helping of action, but they didn't measure up to the original. *Contra III*, however, marked a giant leap forward. It was everything you would expect from a *Contra* game, but with bigger weapons, bigger explosions, bigger bosses, a new post-apocalyptic setting and a motorcycle level. Set piece after set piece, the game was a tour de force of imagination, deft level design and special effects that hasn't aged a single day.

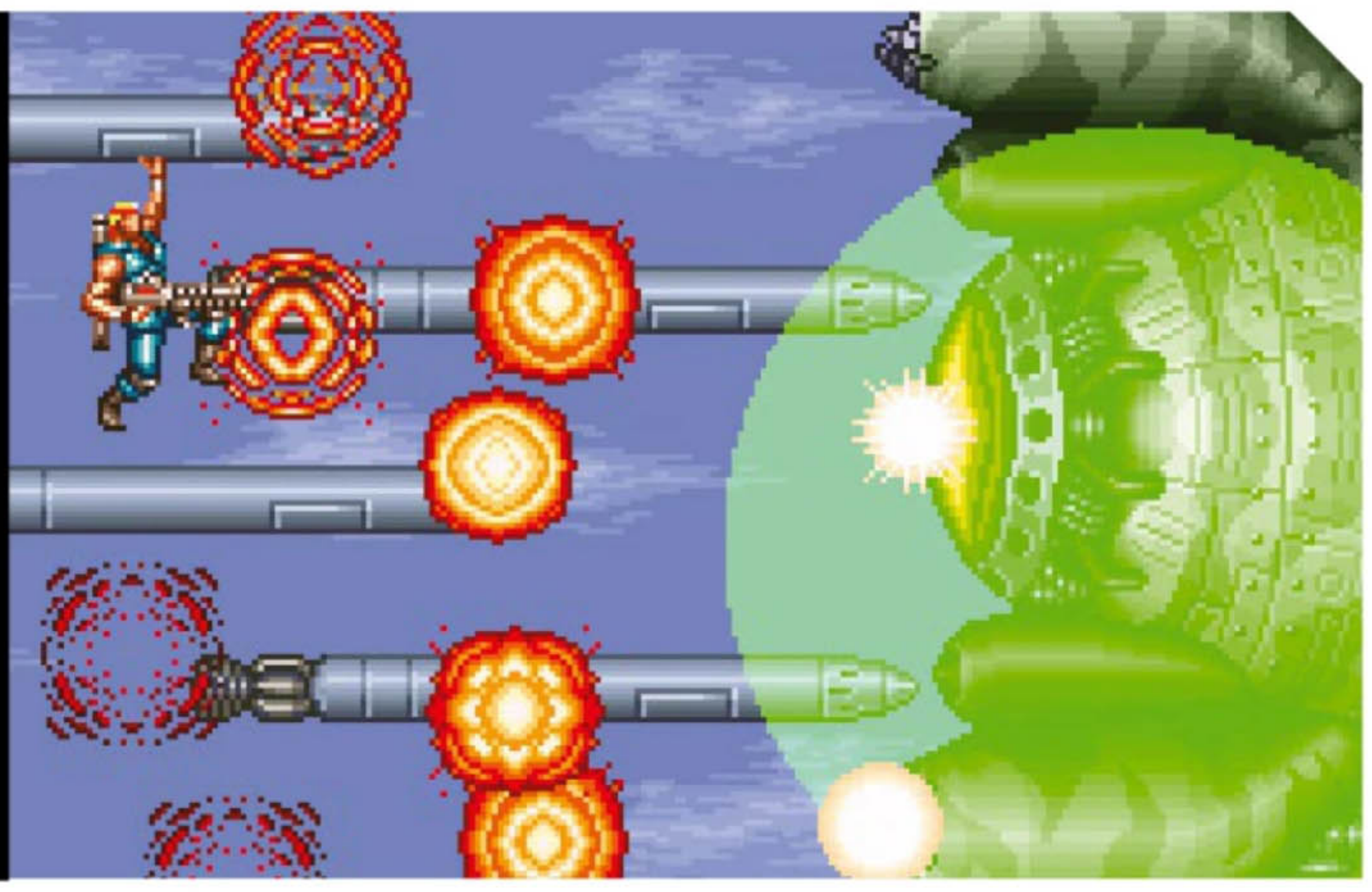
BEST WEAPON



Smart bomb

Many fans will have their favourite weapon. Some love the laser. Others will like the weaker but lovely spread gun, as it makes killing foes an absolute breeze. There are others who will like the flamethrower, as it's great for when you get up close. Therefore, picking a best weapon is a bit of a thankless endeavour, and one we chickened out of by virtue of us going with the smart bomb. It might look like a metal turnip, but release it into the game's atmosphere and see the screen turn hazy, killing grunts with ease and knocking a large chunk off the energy of the game's bosses.

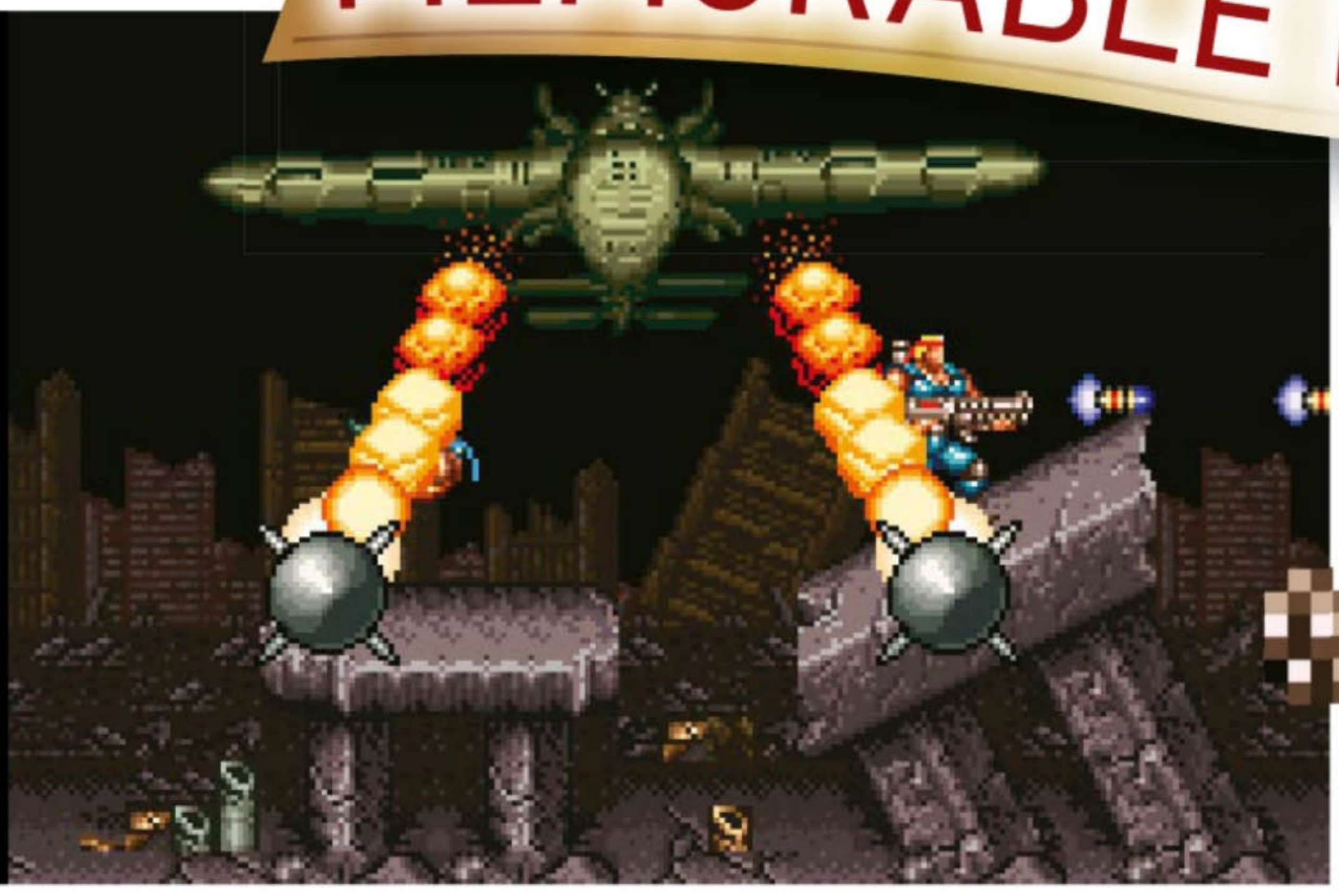
ANOTHER BEST LEVEL



Motorcycle

Given that there are so many great action set pieces in *Contra III*, we had to give a mention to another of its fantastic levels. The motorcycle stage deserves a look in, as it's basically just one giant action set piece. The stage begins with the player astride a 2636 era Ducati, blasting flying aliens before a giant frigate appears, its undercarriage primed with heavy ordnance. Survive this vicious gauntlet and the ship takes to the air, you chasing after it. This leads on to the most insane bit in the entire game: blasting the ship's glowing arse while hopping between missiles being fired at it.

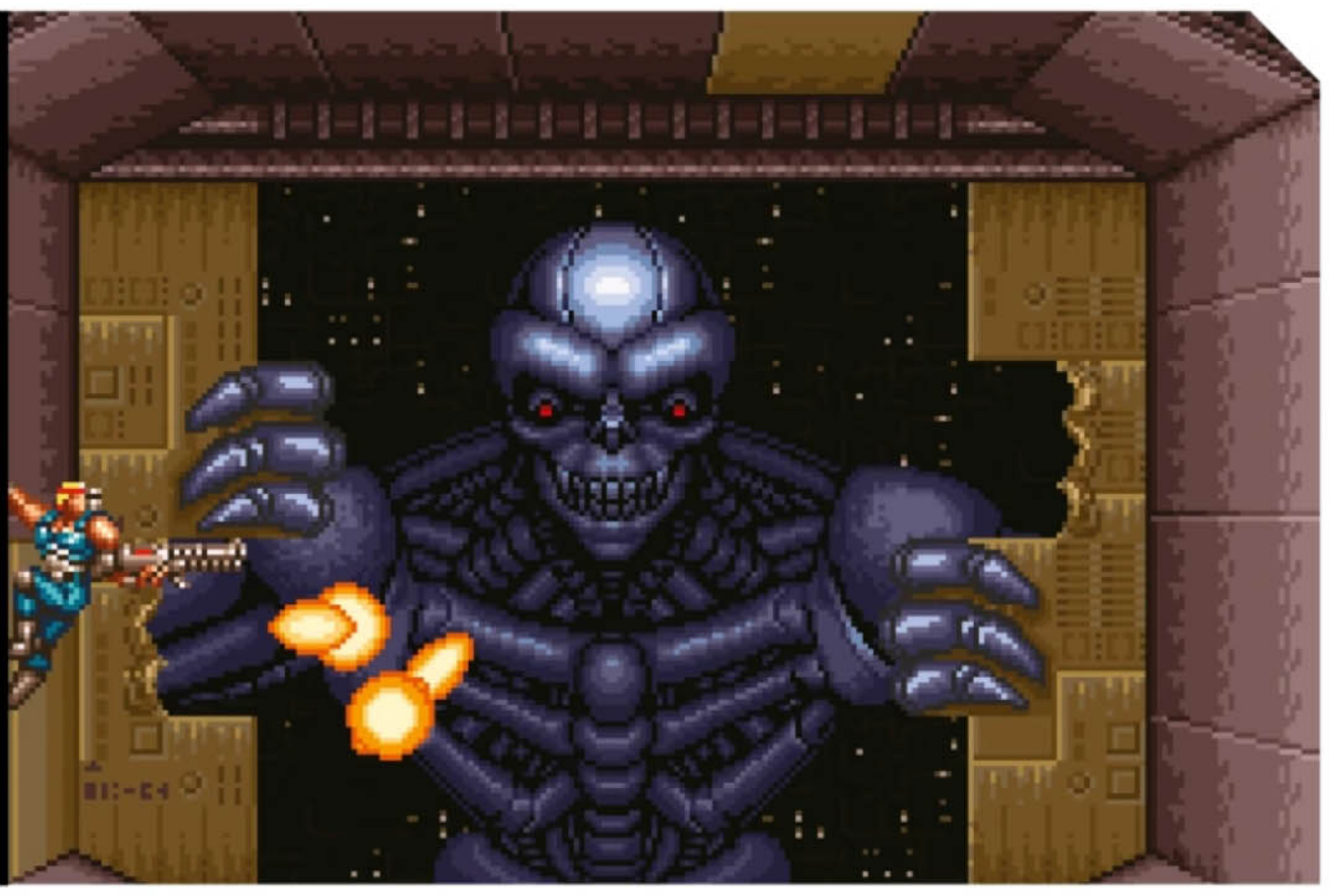
BEST LEVEL



Start as you mean to end

With so many memorable moments in *Contra III*, picking just one was impossible. As the opening stage is a great example of how to grab a teenager's attention and make them part with birthday money, we had to mention it. Within the first few minutes you're gunning down aliens and mutant dogs, hopping into a tank to flatten foes, sampling nearly all of the weapons in the game, dodging a plane as it bombs the city, jumping through the flaming ruins while taking out a wave of winged aliens and finally facing off against a giant, bullet-spewing alien tortoise. It's one of the best opening levels of any videogame.

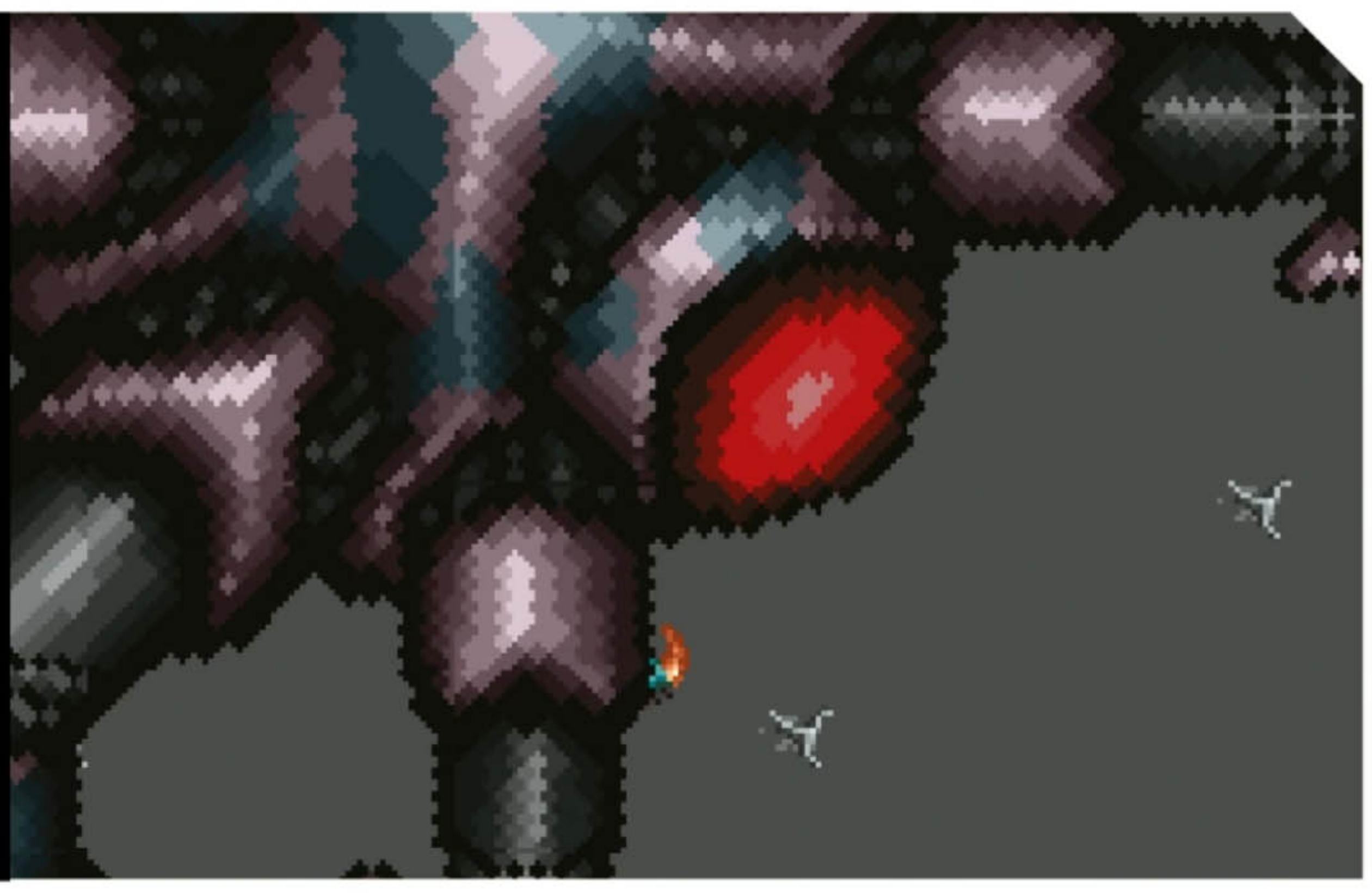
BEST BOSS



The massive Terminator

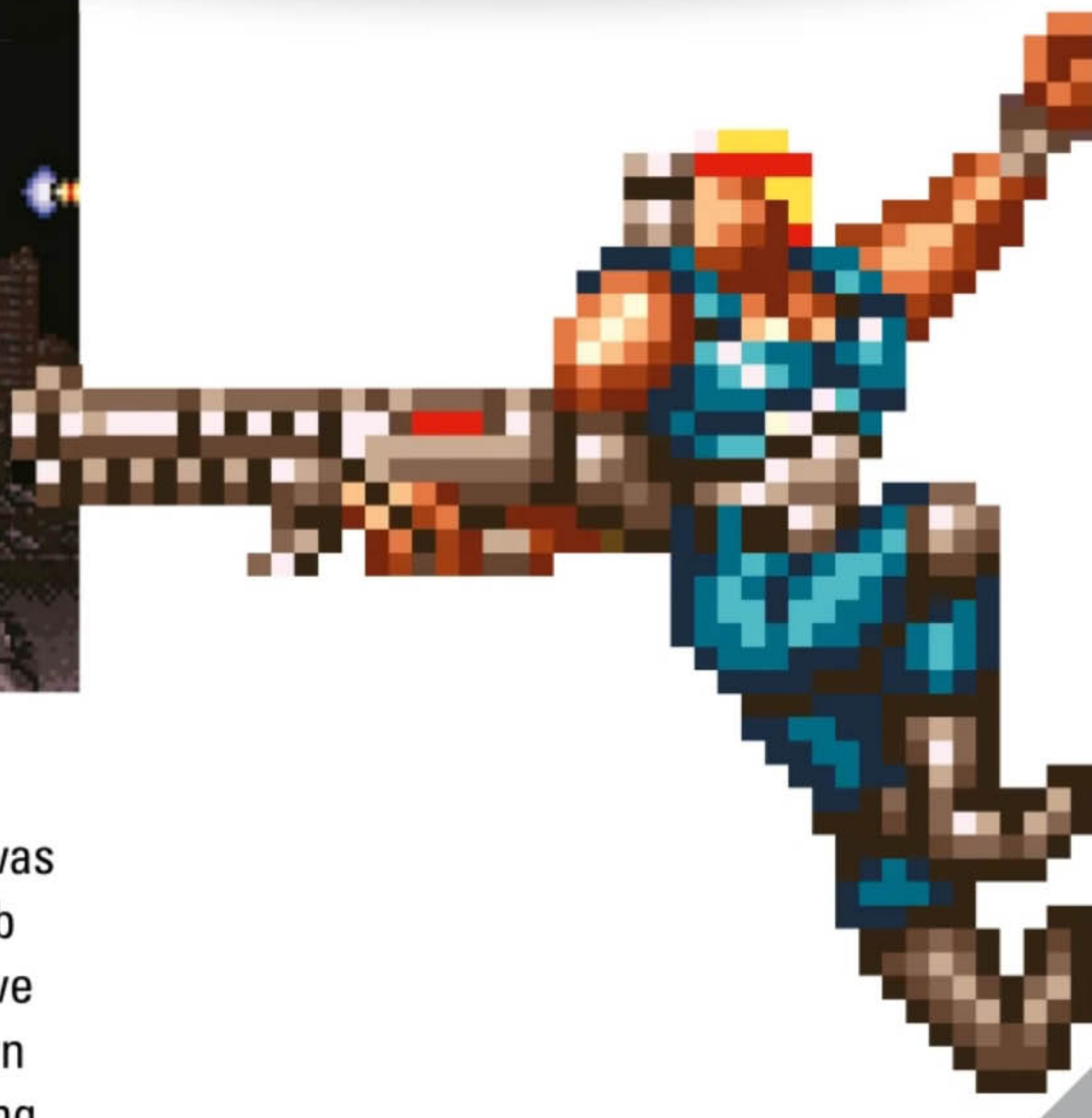
There really was only one boss we could highlight here. And typical of memorable 16-bit bosses, it is something that didn't exactly err on the side of caution as far as copyright was concerned. The giant T-800-alike that rips through the level's wall at the end of the third stage is a tricky one. First, you see his claws pierce the wall, pulling it apart as if it was made of tinfoil, before seeing his beaming red eyes glowing in the darkness. The beast then emerges, firing lasers from its eyes, lobbing bombs into the playing field and breathing fire too. The only thing it doesn't do is ride a motorcycle and shoot up a police station.

BEST USE OF MODE 7



Arachnophobia

From the map in *A Link To The Past* to pseudo-3D like *F-Zero* and *Pilotwings*, the cream of early Super Nintendo games used the console's Mode 7 technique to show off the power of the console, and *Contra III* was no different, proving a great showcase of the versatility of the effect. It was used to create dazzling explosions, two top-down levels, and also several bosses. The first Mode 7 boss is a large robotic spider that scuttles along the floor before jumping into the air, scaling bigger and filling the screen before disappearing, and then making a quick descent in a bid to crush Sully and Jimbo.



CONTRA III THE ALIEN WARS TM

1 PLAYER
2 PLAYERS A
2 PLAYERS B
OPTION

TM AND © 1992 KONAMI CO., LTD.

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN

What the press said… ages ago

MEAN MACHINES
£1.75
DOUBLE DRAGON MEGA-SPECIAL

Mean Machines 95%

Anyone who doubts the abilities of the Super NES should take a look at this – it's unbelievable! The graphics, sounds, special effects and varied, highly addictive gameplay are all absolutely outstanding.

What we think

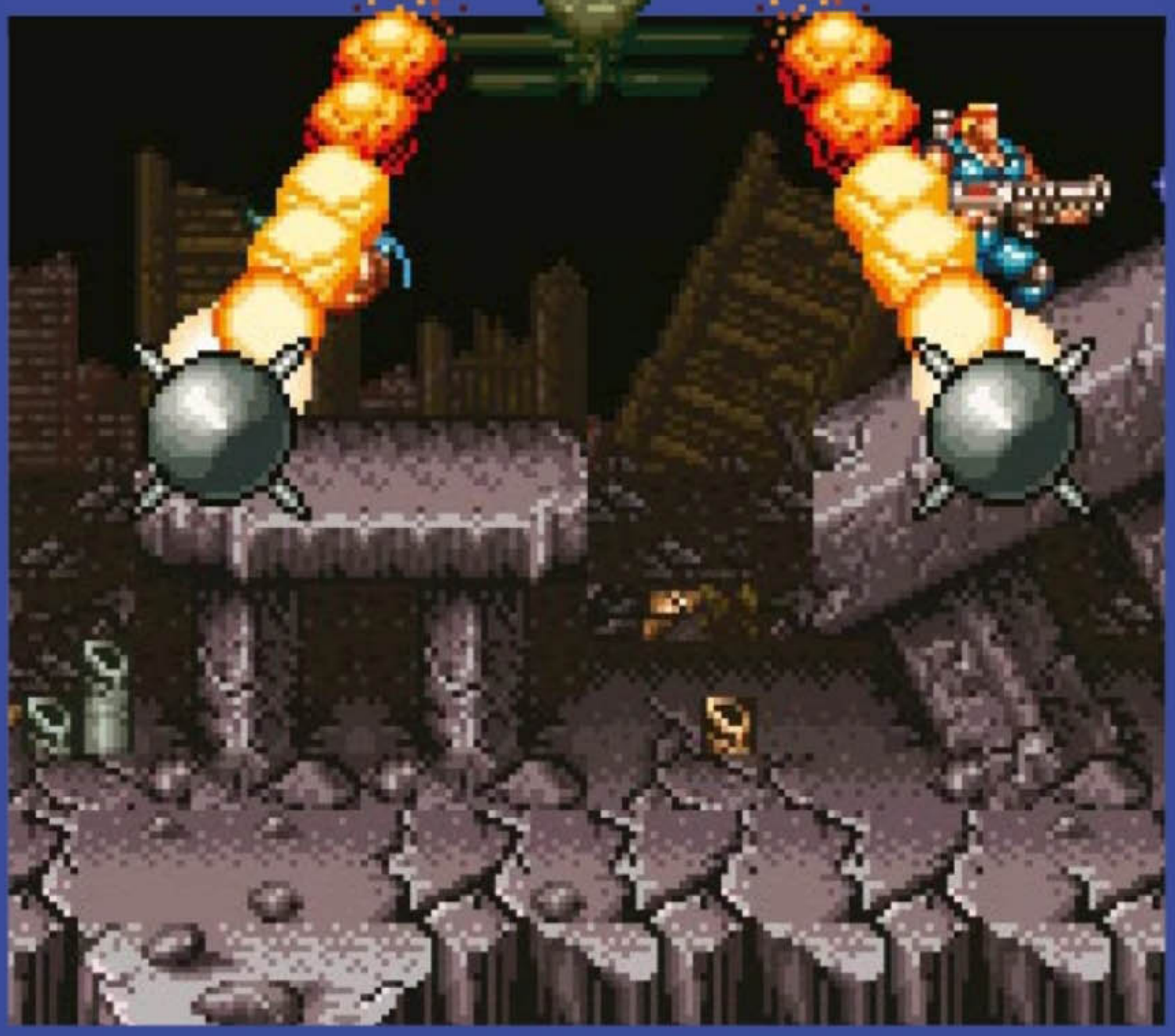
Standing alongside *Gunstar Heroes* and *Metal Slug*, *Contra III* is the pinnacle of run-and-gun gaming, and has still yet to be bettered. It's an outstanding game.

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
SUPER MARIO KART
Nintendo
SNSP-MK-EUR
SNSP-006
EJECT
RESET
POWER
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
SELECT
START
X
A
Y
B

MODE 7 HEAVEN

We look back at some of the best and lesser-known examples of Mode 7, the famous graphics mode that became a hallmark for many early Super Nintendo releases and helped elevate Nintendo gaming during the Nineties

Contra III: The Alien Wars



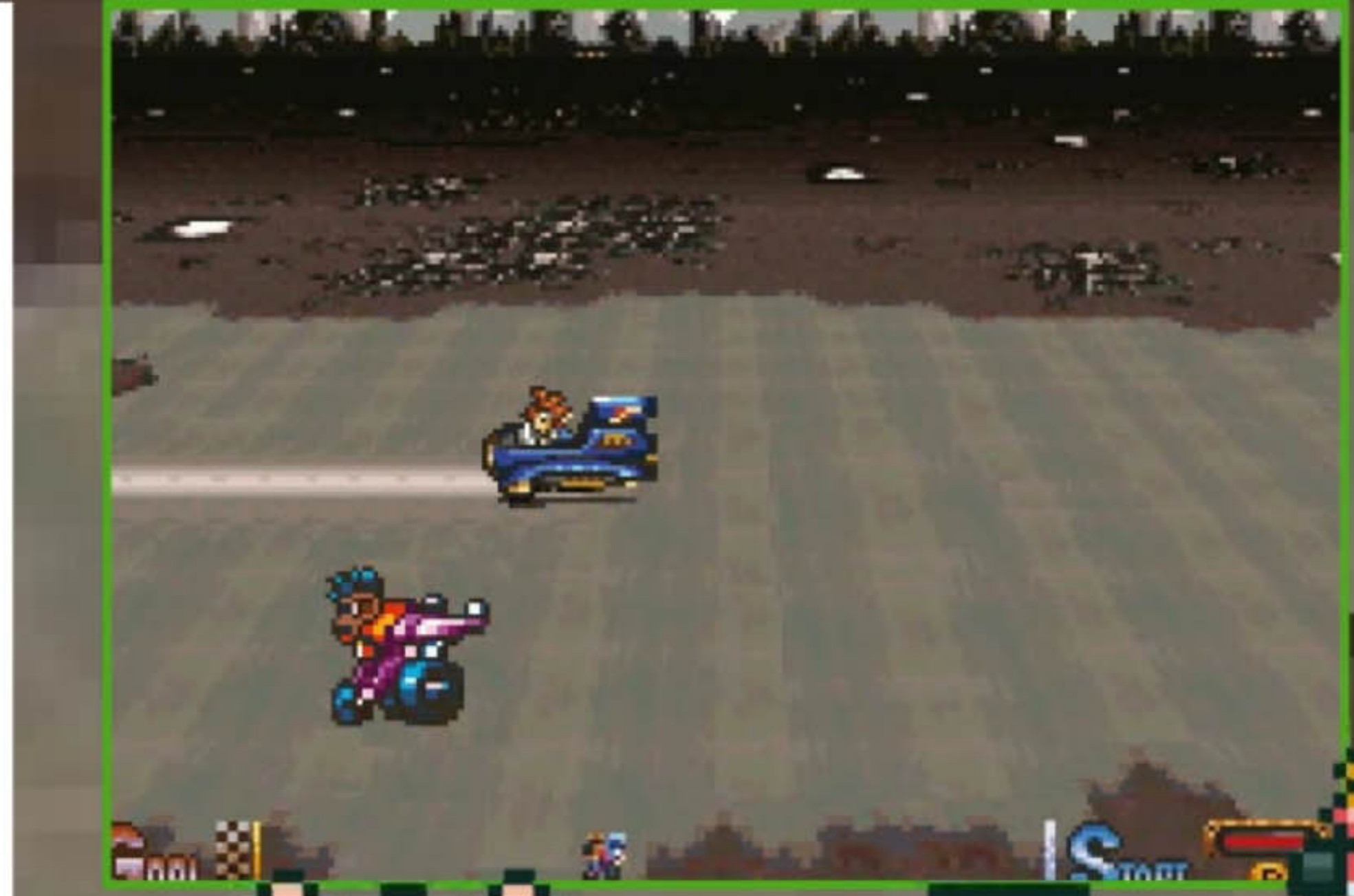
Best Mode 7 moment: The opening stage
Year: 1992
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house

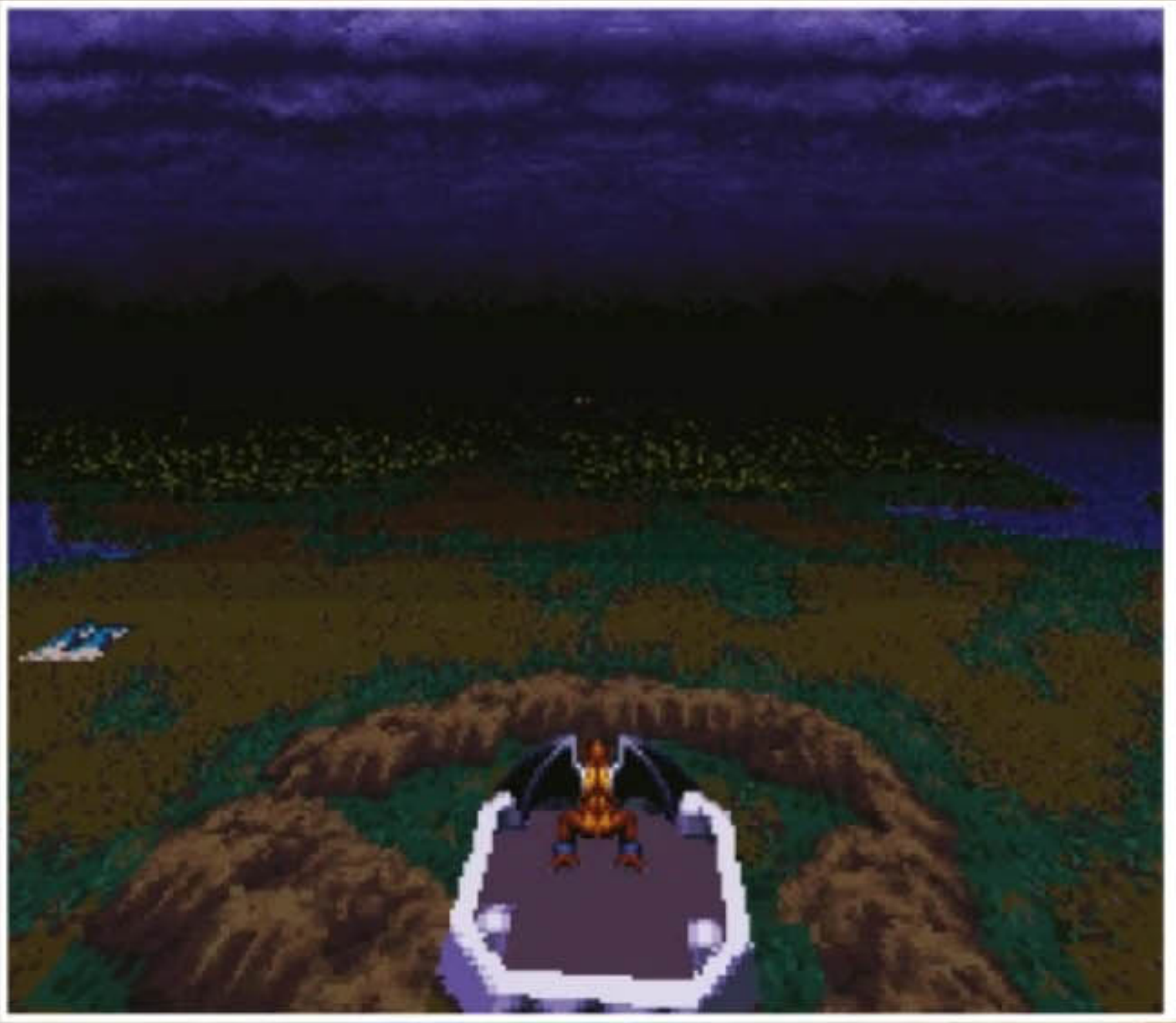
The foremost thing to remember about SNES Mode 7 is that its powers are ineffective on game sprites. However, Mode 7 can rotate and increase the size of background images to give the impression they're animated; to create a 'Mode 7 sprite' (a term we've just made up but feel is befitting). Developers are also able to go a step further by adding moving parts made of sprites to really mess with our heads. For two really good examples of this technique in action look no further than the epic first stage of *Contra III: The Alien Wars*, which is packed with Mode 7 moments. The low-flying plane that turns up midway through the game's first stage forms part of a background layer and is animated using Mode 7 (as it comes closer to the screen its size increases and its wings bank slightly). However, the bombs that it drops are sprites. Similarly, the body, neck and head of the turtle boss that awaits at the end of the stage also sits in the background, while the bullets it fires and moving legs are sprites. These are two of the best examples of Mode 7 being used by a developer to create believable animated objects in games.

Chrono Trigger

Best Mode 7 moment: The crazy racing mini-game
Year: 1995
Publisher: Squaresoft
Developer: In-house

There are many examples of Mode 7 being put to good use in Square's epic time-travelling RPG *Chrono Trigger*, but our favourite is the Jetbike mini-game found in the Beyond The Ruins future chapter. While most racing games use Mode 7 to generate into-the-screen tracks, *Chrono Trigger* shows the effect being put to use in a side-on racing scenario – although the shoulder buttons allow you to rotate the camera. The fun and challenging mini-game proved so popular among fans that Square later released a standalone digital version for the Sattellaview titled *Chrono Trigger: Jet Bike Special.*





Demon's Crest

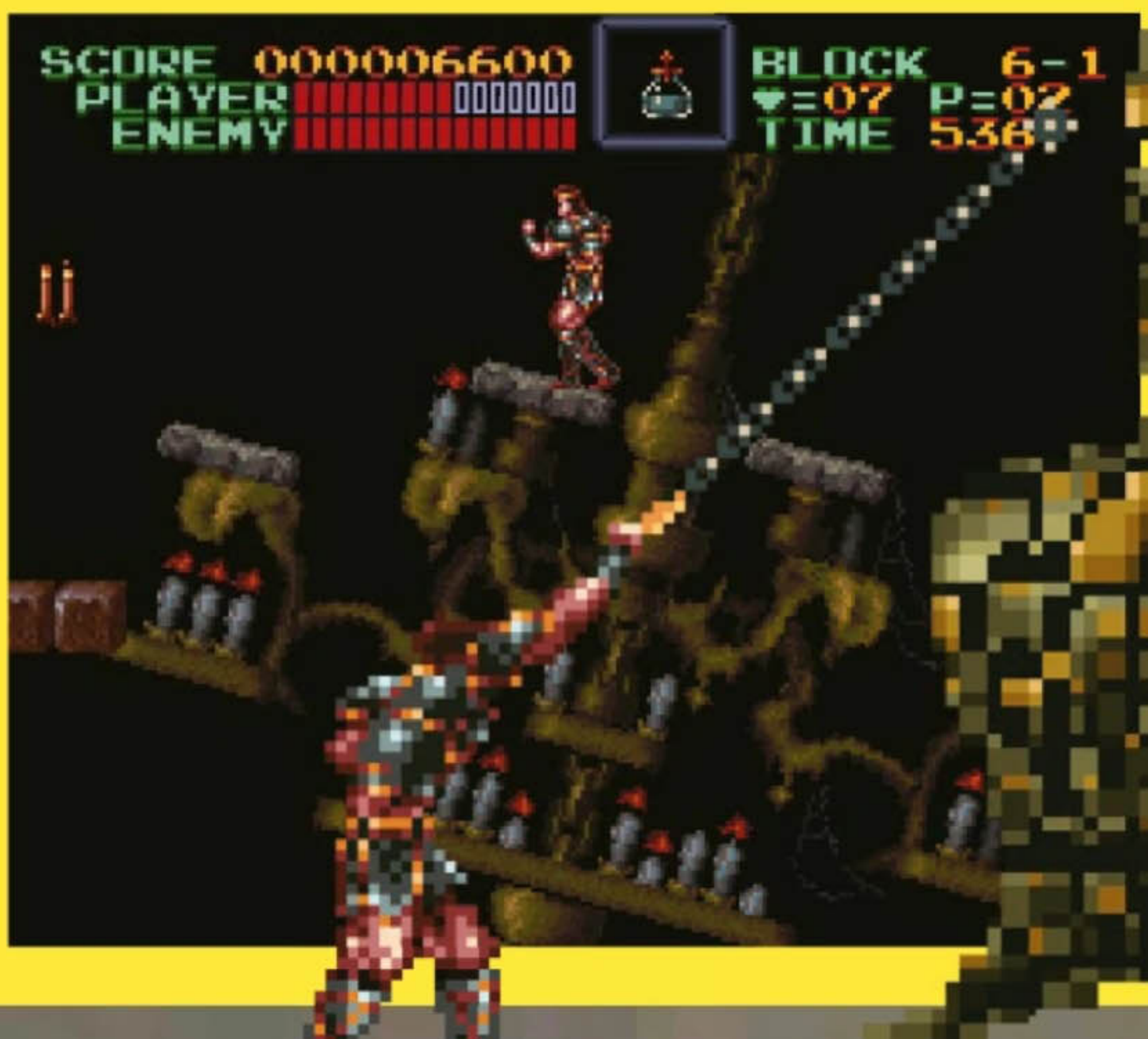
Best Mode 7 moment: Getting around
Year: 1994
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house

Demon's Crest is a superb action/platformer that is every bit as atmospheric and challenging as its famous cousin *Ghosts 'n Goblins*. The third part of the excellent *Gargoyle's Quest* series, *Demon's Crest* made this list purely for its neat world map, which, thanks to some Mode 7 magic, allowed you to navigate and land on it *Pilotwings* fashion to replay stages.

Super Castlevania IV

Best Mode 7 moment: Fighting Koronot
Year: 1991
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house

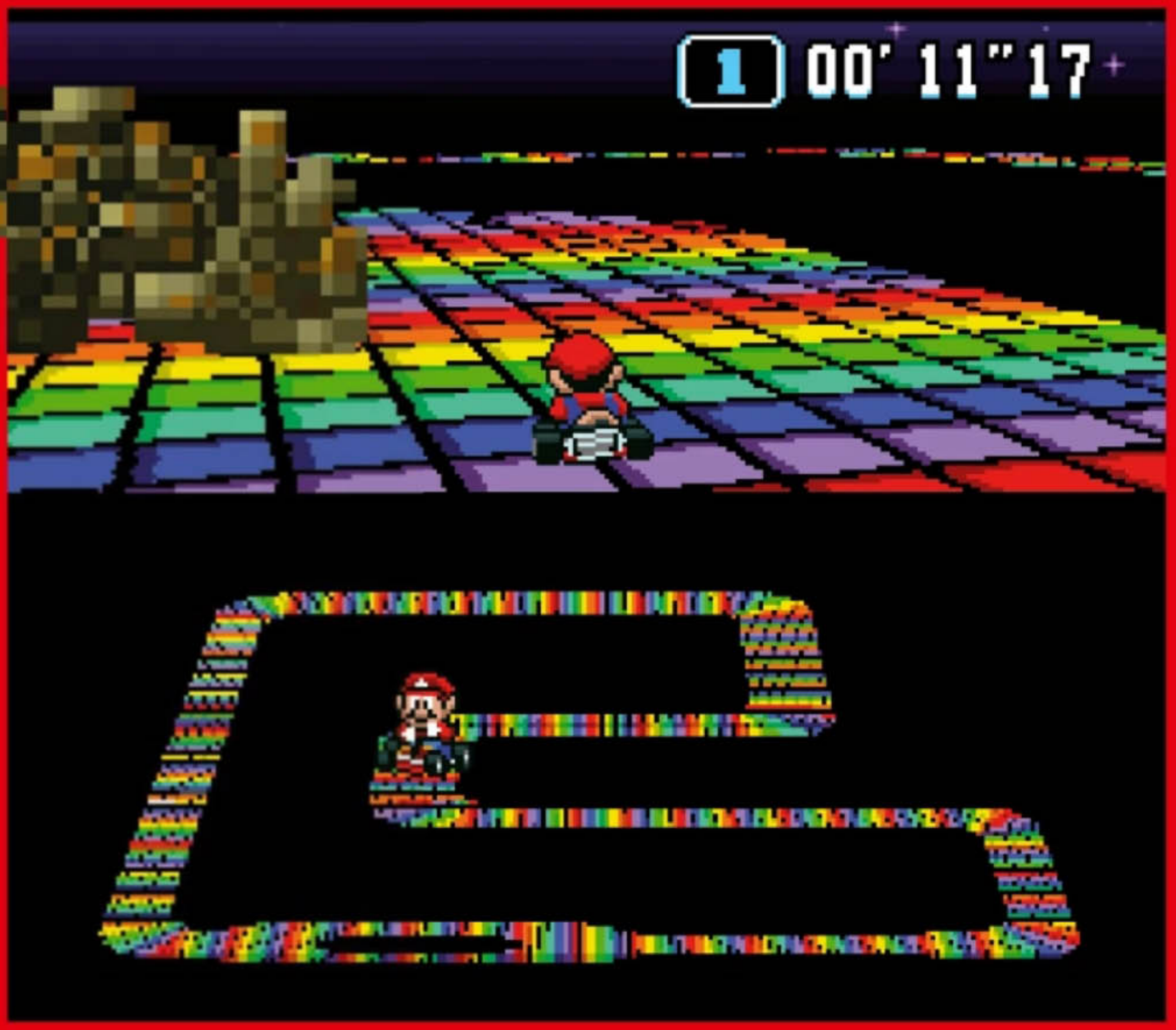
The nightmare world of *Castlevania* is the perfect environment for Mode 7 to do its thing, and Konami put it to great use in *Super Castlevania IV.* Mode 7 can be seen in the game's map screen, its rotating stages, those cool rocking chandeliers on Stage 5 and even in some of its more memorable bosses. And this brings us rather nicely to our favourite Mode 7 moment in the game – the stone golem boss Koronot. Fought at the end of stage four, every time you hit him with the Vampire Killer he shrinks in size and causes the sky to hail stones. That is until you make that final killer blow and he expands to fill the entire screen.

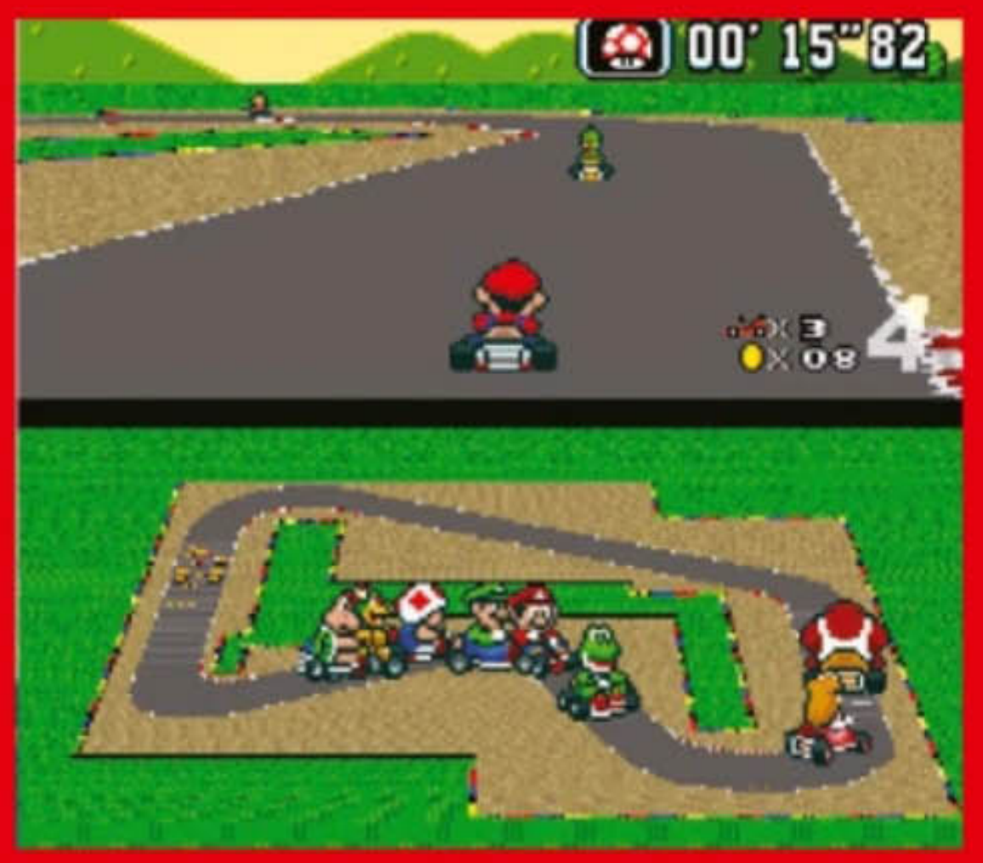


Super Mario Kart

Best Mode 7 moment: Rainbow Road
Year: 1992
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house

Though *F-Zero* was the first game to show the exhilarating things Mode 7 could bring to racing games, it was clear there was room for refinement. *F-Zero*'s glitzy, neon-coloured racer is certainly fast and pretty, but its racing gets shown up for being shallow when compared to *Super Mario Kart*. *Super Mario Kart* is *F-Zero* but with more intricate tracks, modes and sprites (characters, weapons, power-ups and annoying flat moles). It raised the bar of Mode 7 application, but it also spawned Nintendo's most successful-ever racing franchise. It would also be remiss of us to not mention that Mode 7 marks the first time the bright, vibrant and colourful world of the *Mario* franchise was presented in a way resembling believable 3D. That it was also immensely playable didn't do much to hurt its success either.



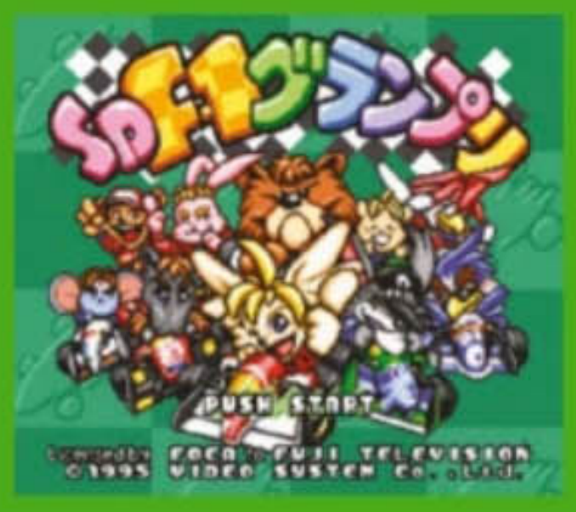


We expose blatant Super Mario Kart copycarts

Kat's Run

This obscure racer plays like a *Gran Turismo* take on *Super Mario Kart*. After picking your driver from the ten spiky-haired racers on offer, you select your vehicle and then compete in street races. Because *Kat's Run* is grounded in reality both visually and track-wise it suffers. With dull circuits and visuals, it is unfortunately one of the least impressive Mode 7 racers on Super Nintendo.

SD F-1 Grand Prix



The most blatant *Super Mario Kart* clone ever produced, *SD F-1 Grand Prix* stars a cast of cuddly super deformed (SD) critters and a few tracks which ape those in Nintendo's racer. As it sticks so close to the *Mario Kart* template it's unsurprising it's a decent racer. The irony though is that it's part of an established racing franchise (Video System's *F1 Grand Prix*) that predates *Super Mario Kart*. One of the more impressive Mode 7 racers.

Uchuu Race: Astro Go! Go!

The colourful eye-bursting result of what happens when you mix two parts *F-Zero* with one part *Super Mario Kart*, *Uchuu Race* is a bright, cutesy cartoonish future racer. The game's most notable thing is that you can turn your craft 360 degrees. As a result, the controls can feel erratic initially and make the more challenging pinball-style obstacle-packed stages quite frustrating. Overall though, it's a decent if imitative racer.

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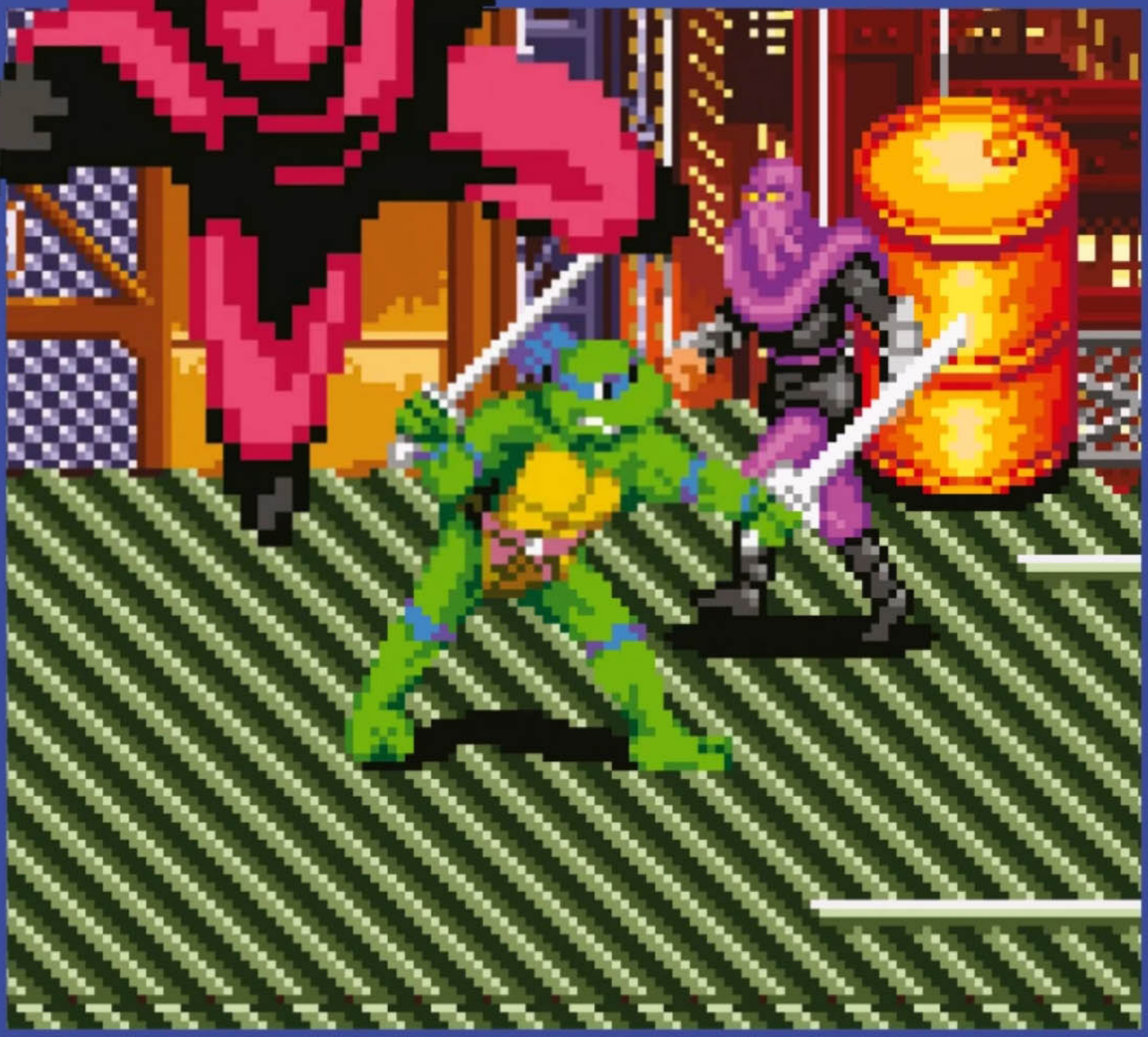


Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV: Turtles in Time

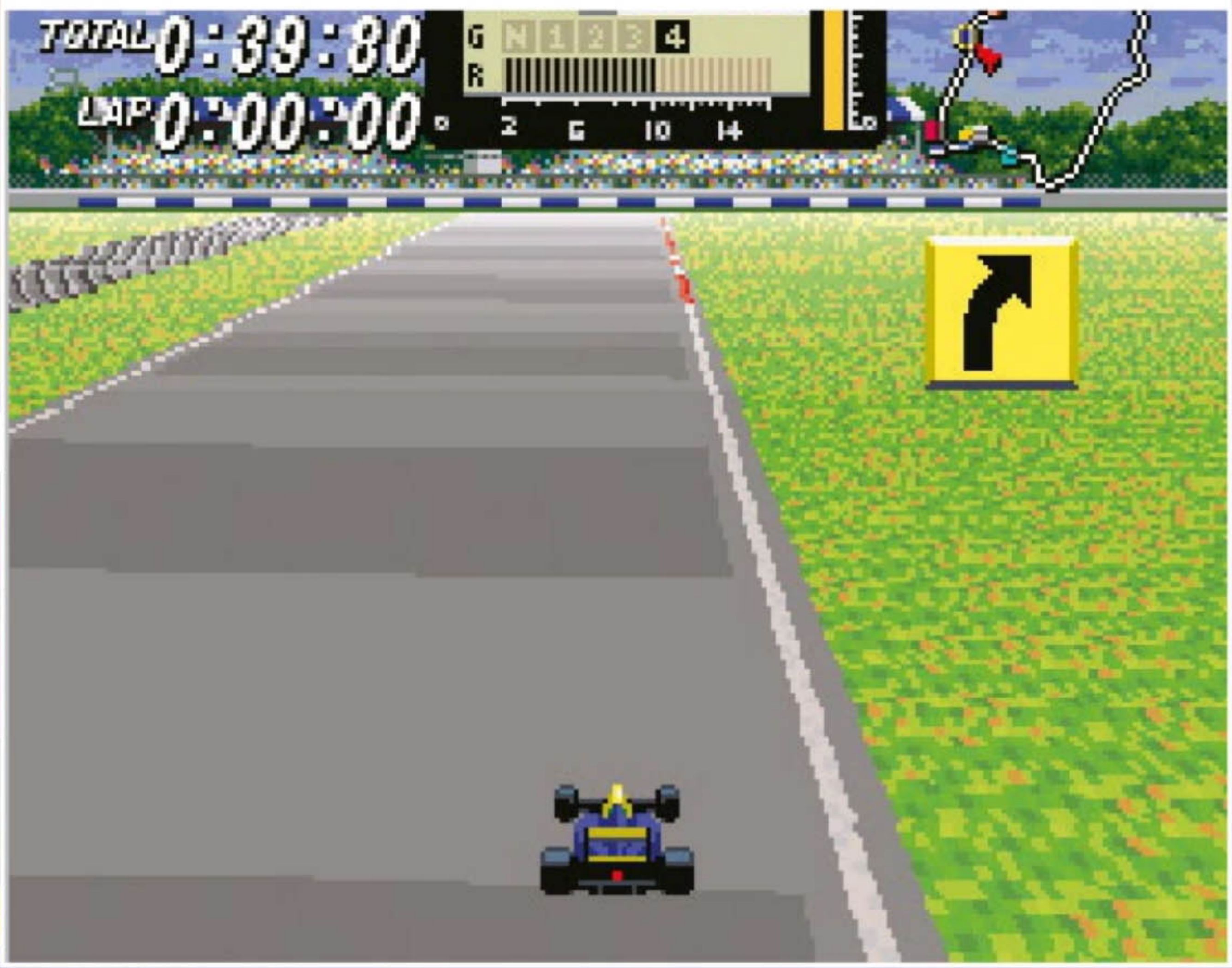
Best Mode 7 moment: Foot Soldier fling
Year: 1992
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house

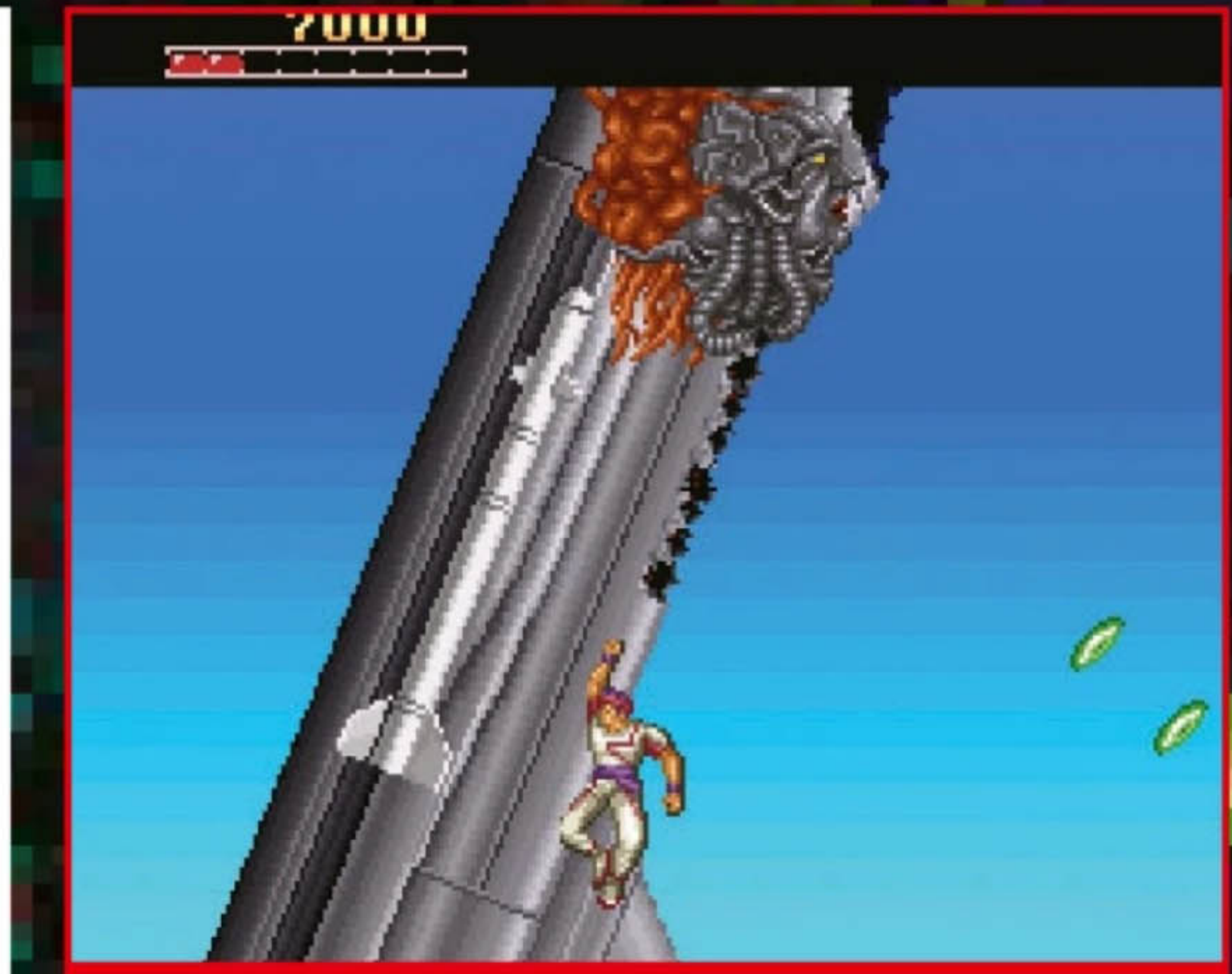
The most vivid Mode 7 scenes are often those that took us by surprise. Those moments we'd be sat playing game X and then all of a sudden a cool Mode 7 trick would materialize from out of nowhere. Though this SNES port features a great Mode 7 recreation of the arcade game's thrilling hoverboard stage, it's the Foot Soldier-towards-camera fling that stuck in our minds most. Capturing the slapstick nature of the cartoon perfectly, seeing it never gets boring. In fact, we'd even go so far as to say it's a frontrunner for the best Mode 7 moment ever.

Exhaust Heat

Best Mode 7 moment: Pitting
Year: 1992
Publisher: Seta Corporation
Developer: In-house

Exhaust Heat is a very different racer to Nintendo's more famous Mode 7 offerings. Its charm and speed are slow coming, with its tracks (based on real circuits) feeling a bit empty by comparison and exhilarating racing only arriving once you've enough money to upgrade your car. But be patient, and you'll find that *Exhaust Heat* is a great racer with some subtle sim elements. Wonderfully presented throughout, our standout Mode 7 moment occurs when you enter a pit and the camera seamlessly rotates to the side of your car.





Run Saber

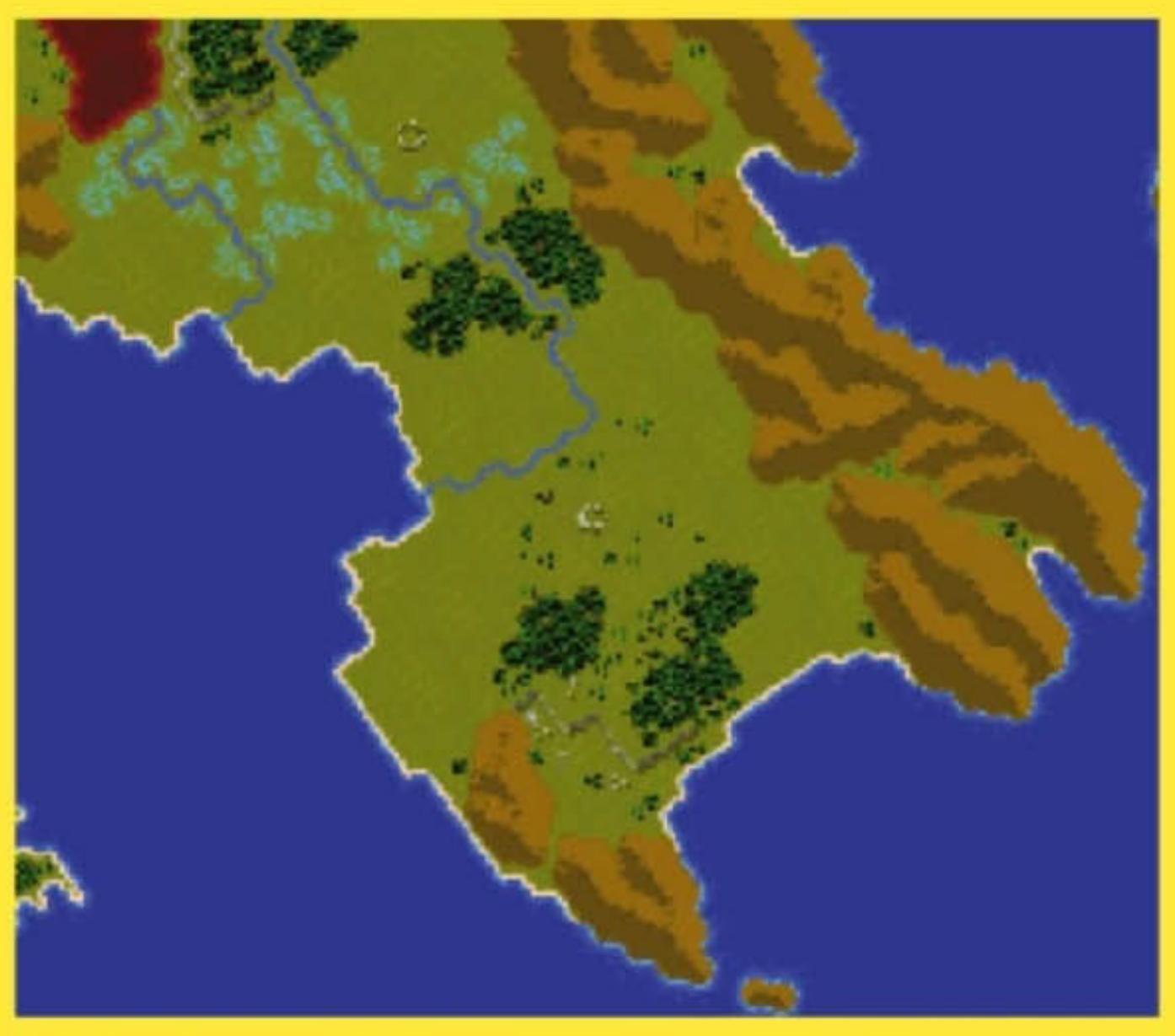
Best Mode 7 moment: Plane battle
Year: 1993
Publisher: Atlus Co.
Developer: Horisoft

Often dubbed as the *Super Nintendo Strider*, owing to starring two lithe plasma sword-waving heroes able to cling to walls and do fancy somersaults, *Run Saber* is an imitative but entertaining action game. Mode 7 was often used by developers as a way to insert something memorable to boss encounters, and this is demonstrated by *Run Saber*'s first boss. A battle that takes place in the sky, you have to fight a disembodied biomechanical Medusa head while clinging desperately to an F-14 Tomcat that loops in the air.

ActRaiser

Best Mode 7 moment: World map
Year: 1990
Publisher: Enix Corporation
Developer: Quintet

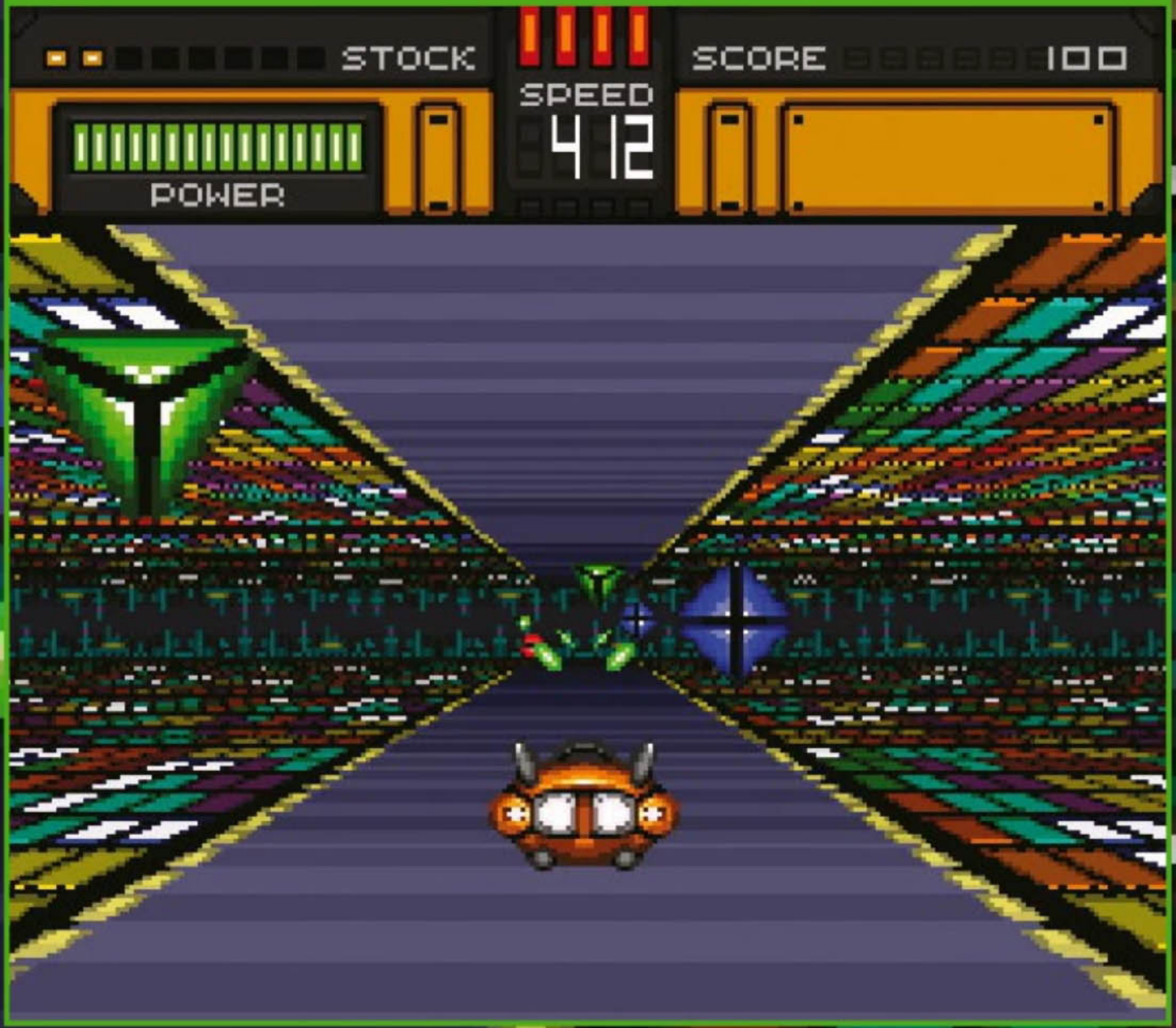
Anyone who has played this unusual city building hack-and-slash marriage will attest that its title screen really utilises Mode 7. Yes, it's just a spinning word, but it grabs your attention. For us though, the best Mode 7 moment has to be when you enter a new stage. Starting from high up in your heavenly hub palace, you see the camera spiral towards the overworld map and home in on the level.

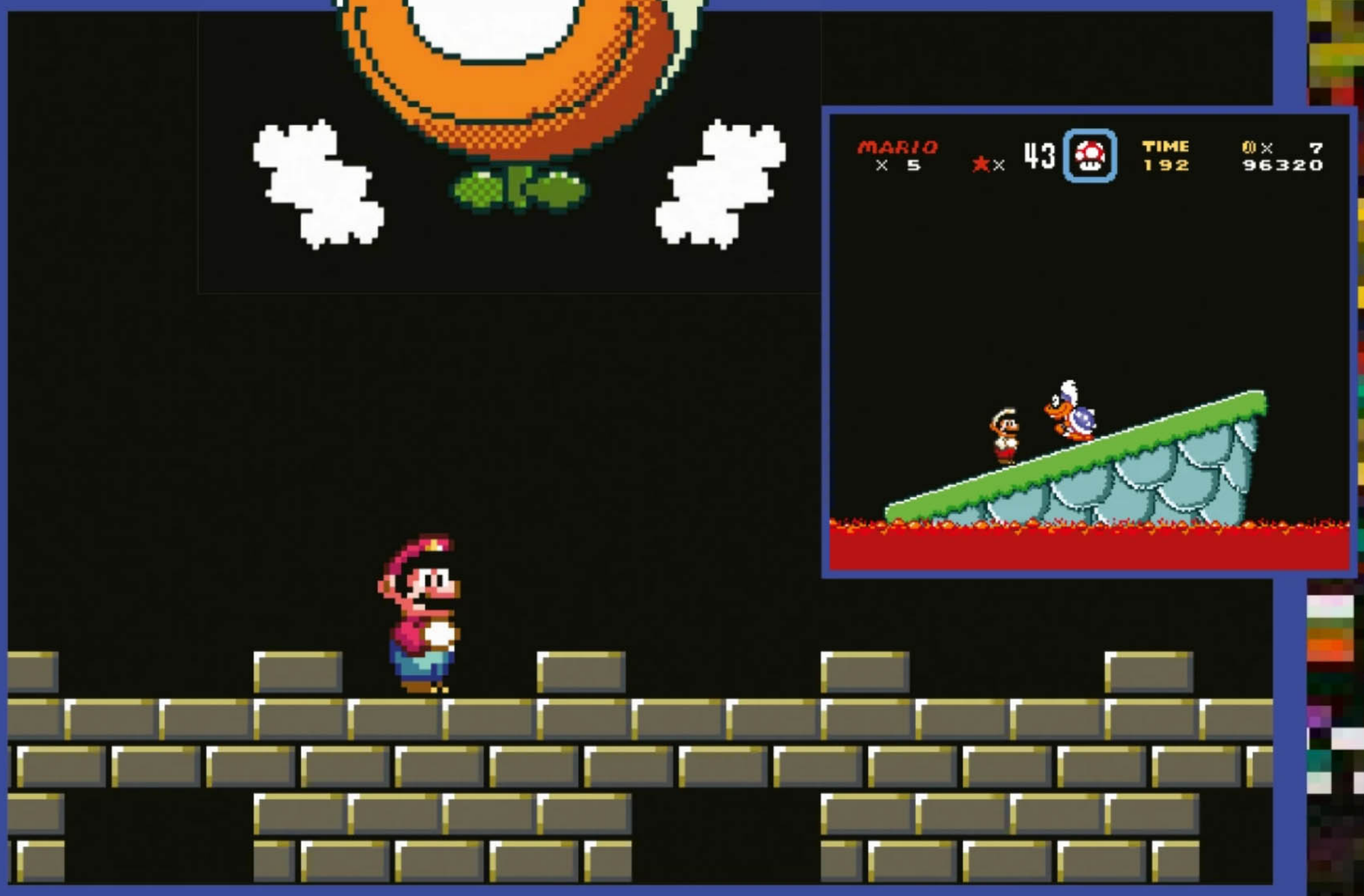


HyperZone

Best Mode 7 moment: First stage
Year: 1991
Publisher: HAL Laboratory
Developer: In-house

HyperZone was an early release for the console and arrived the very same month as the console's US release. Playing like a lovely sounding cross between *F-Zero* and *Space Harrier*, you steer a tubby spaceship through a series of eight colourful Mode 7-created courses, shooting unimaginative enemies until you come up against a slightly less unimaginative looking boss. The stages tracks also have strict lanes to follow, and straying from them causes your ship take damage *F-Zero*-style. While this does help to add a subtle racing feel to the shooting, there's not much fun or variety in *HyperZone*. It's a clear case of Mode 7 over substance – thankfully, and surprisingly, a road the majority of Mode 7 games chose not to follow.





Super Mario World

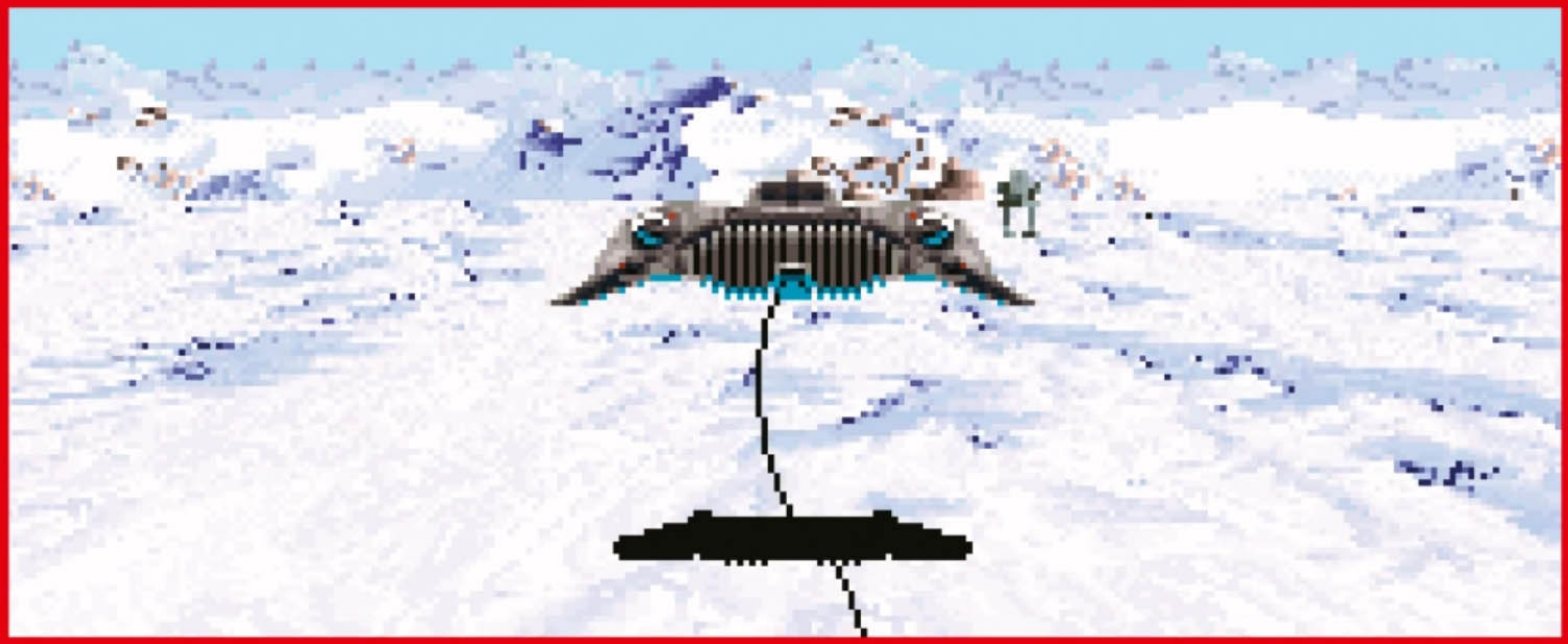
Best Mode 7 moment: Fighting Bowser
Year: 1990
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house

After revisiting *Mario*'s epic 16-bit adventure to write this feature we were surprised to discover that there weren't as many instances of Mode 7 being utilised as we remember. It's mostly used in the boss fights, where it can be seen creating the see-sawing platform you fight Iggy Koopa on and helping Morton Koopa JR. scale the inner walls of his castle. Nintendo saved the best example for last though, with a memorable final battle against Bowser that saw him dropping fireballs, enemies and giant cannonballs from inside a Dr. Robotnik-esque clown-faced flying machine. Breaking from his attack sequences to steer it backwards and then fly it towards the camera until that silly, smug clown face filled the entire screen, if that didn't motivate players into finishing the fight nothing would…Well maybe the added sight of seeing Princess Toadstool appear from inside the device to do her damsel-in-distress bit.

Super Star Wars – The Empire Strikes Back

Best Mode 7 moment: Battle of Hoth
Year: 1993
Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: Sculptured Software

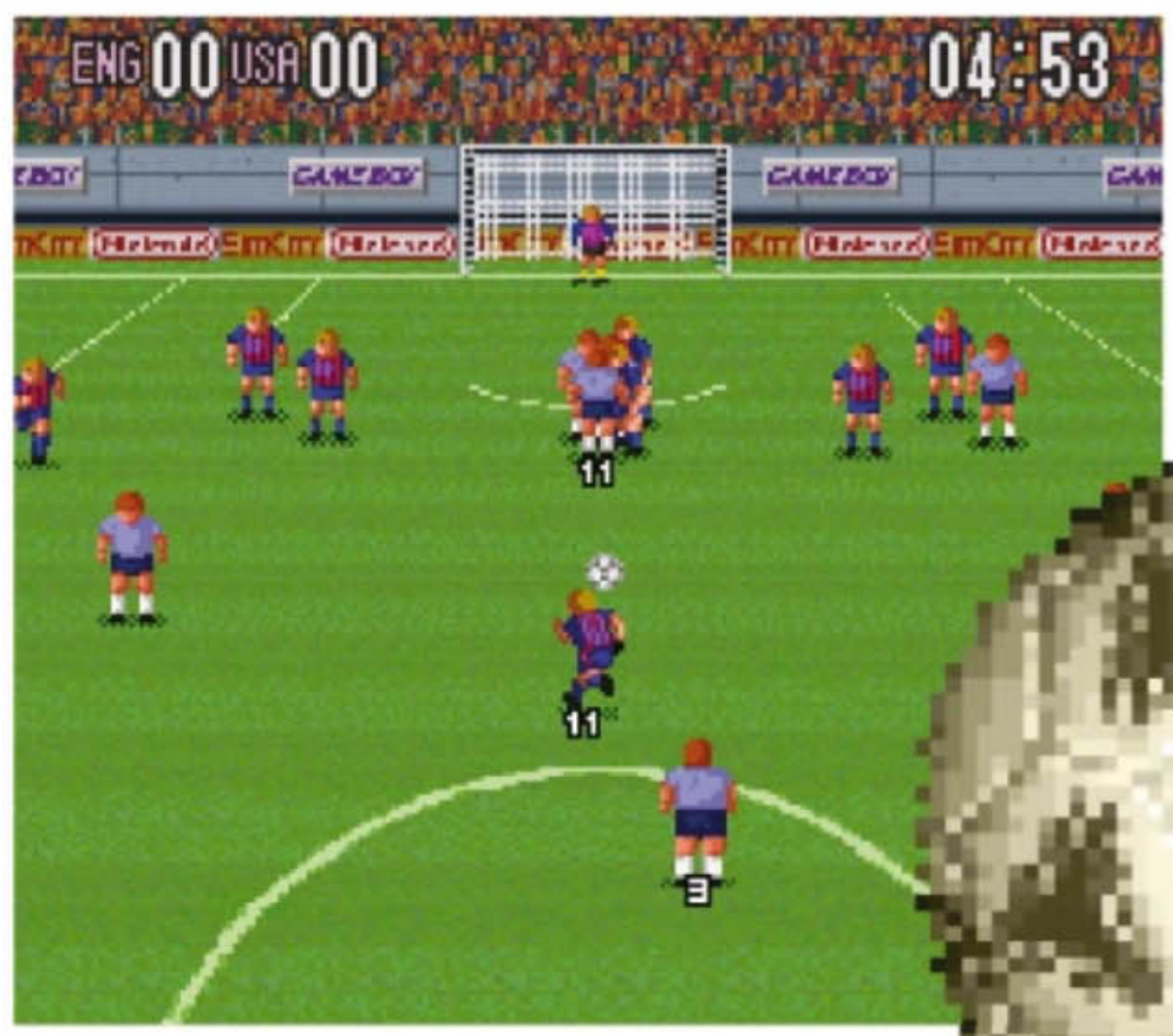
The Battle of Hoth has been restaged in videogames numerous times, and most have provided great set-piece moments – or in the case of the 2600 an entire game. This epic Mode 7 stage was the most faithful recreation of the epic snow fight. With some stunning undulating Hoth terra firma to fly over, the mission tasks you with destroying a set number of varied targets, ranging from Probe Droids to AT-ATs. The stage then gets really awesome when it introduces AT-AT Walkers to the fight and allows you to take them down by cable-tying their legs together and causing them to trip over and kiss the snow.

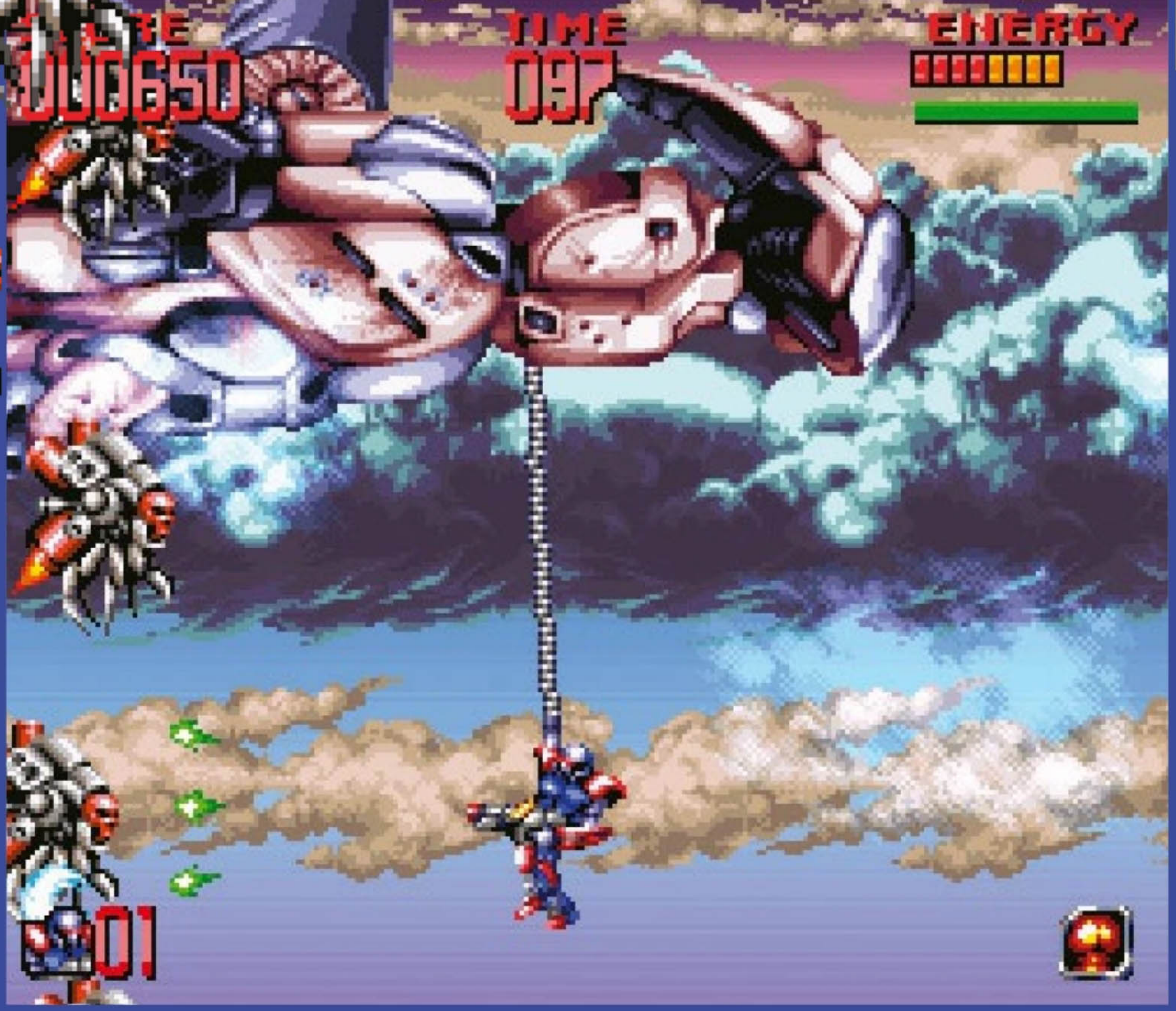


Super Soccer

Best Mode 7 moment: Kick-off
Year: 1992
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Human Entertainment

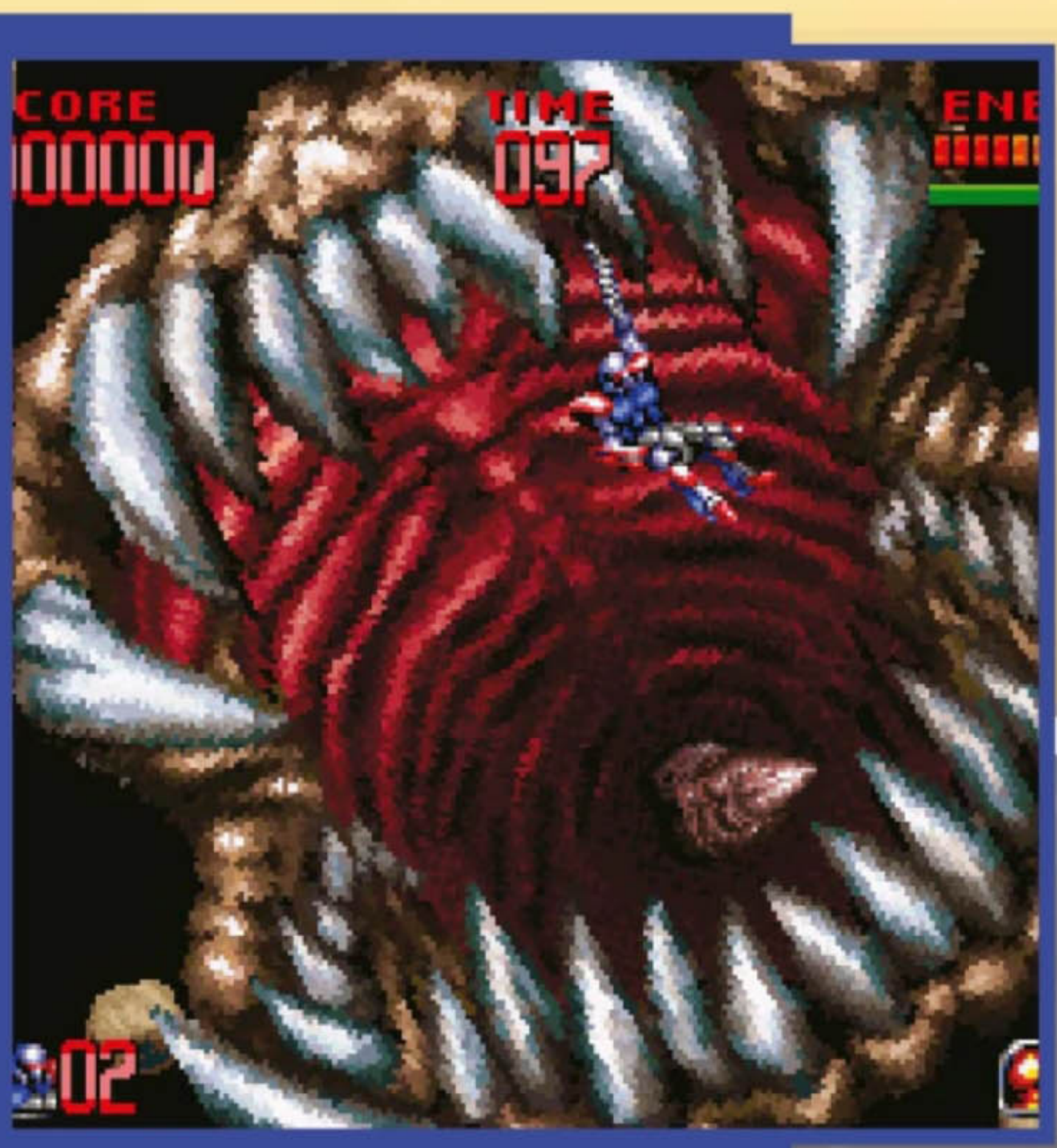
While *Super Tennis* used Mode 7 in a subtle way – it was used on its intro screen and as a way to circle the camera around the court when players swapped ends, *Super Soccer* was much more blatant in its usage. The impressive looking but fidgety feeling football pitch certainly brought a few issues; the action felt a little sluggish, it wasn't always easy to judge passes and tackles, and for one half of the match you were running up a pitch you couldn't actually see. However, the jaunty graphics and unique perspective still won you over. *Super Soccer* isn't the greatest football game, but it certainly captures the fun nature of the sport, especially in multiplayer.





Super Turrican 2

Best Mode 7 moment: Worm boss
Year: 1995
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: Factor 5

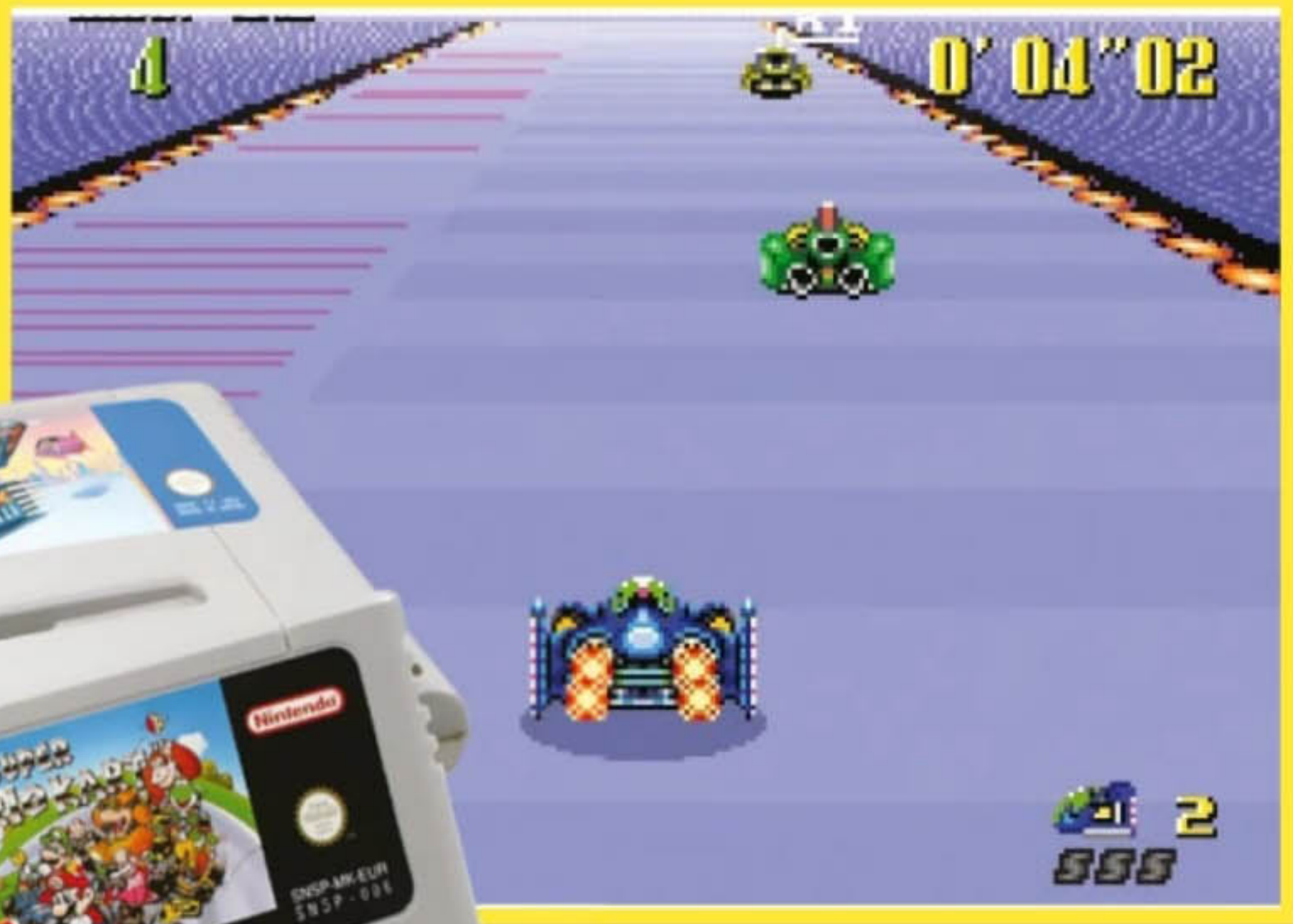


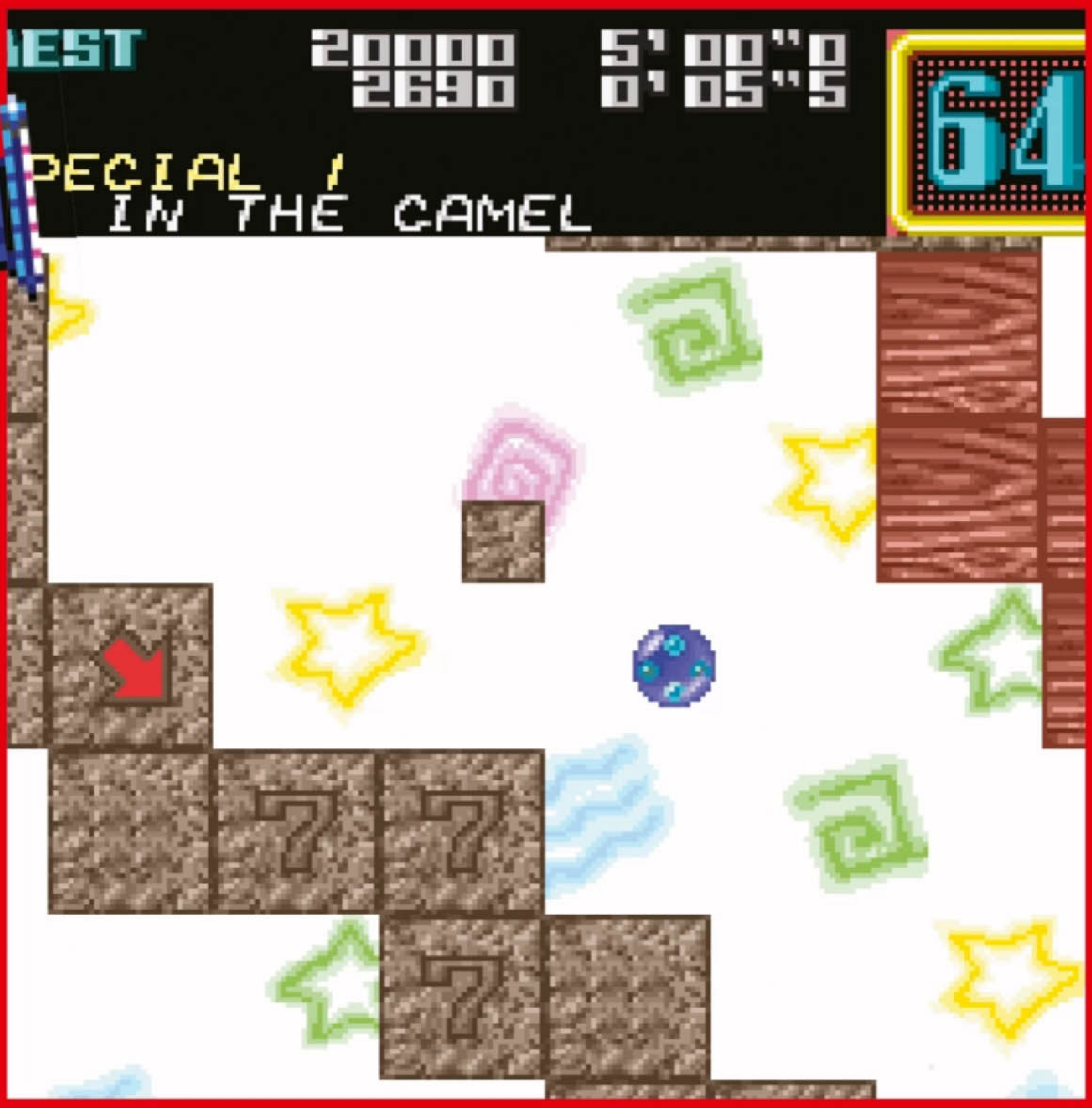
Super Turrican 2 really puts the Super Nintendo through its paces. Though it doesn't have the *Metroid* feel of the 8-bit original, it's a real showcase of fancy Super Nintendo visual effects, and provides no shortage of great Mode 7 moments. Our choice picks include the giant Mode 7 Sarlacc-style worm boss that you have to fight from inside its gaping mouth, the superb robotic spider boss, and the neat into-the-screen racing/shooter sections. Developed by Factor 5, who is probably most well-known for the *Star Wars Rogue Squadron* series of Nintendo games, it's a truly fantastic shooter with visuals, imagination and set-piece moments that easily meet those high points of *Contra 3*, and Chris Hueslbeck's soundtrack is brilliant too. A polished and sensational shooter, it's just a shame that copies go for so much money these days.

F-Zero

Best Mode 7 moment: First track
Year: 1990
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house

While *F-Zero* may not be the most deep racing experience, if seen as Nintendo trying to show that its new console could easily handle an arcade-style racing game then it certainly achieves its goal. Said to be loosely connected to the obscure NES racer *Mach Rider*, which started its life as a plastic toy bike back when Nintendo was a toy maker, *F-Zero* was a perfect showcase for what the Mode 7 could do. Not only was *F-Zero* a launch game for the console but it was also the first game to utilise Mode 7, which here is used to create its stunning pseudo 3D tracks. Allowing the racing to feel incredibly fast and smooth as it wasn't pushing around intricate track and level designs – something which has remained a speed over detail hallmark for the series, nothing touched it in terms of exhilaration and visuals. It even left some arcade games eating its dust.





On The Ball

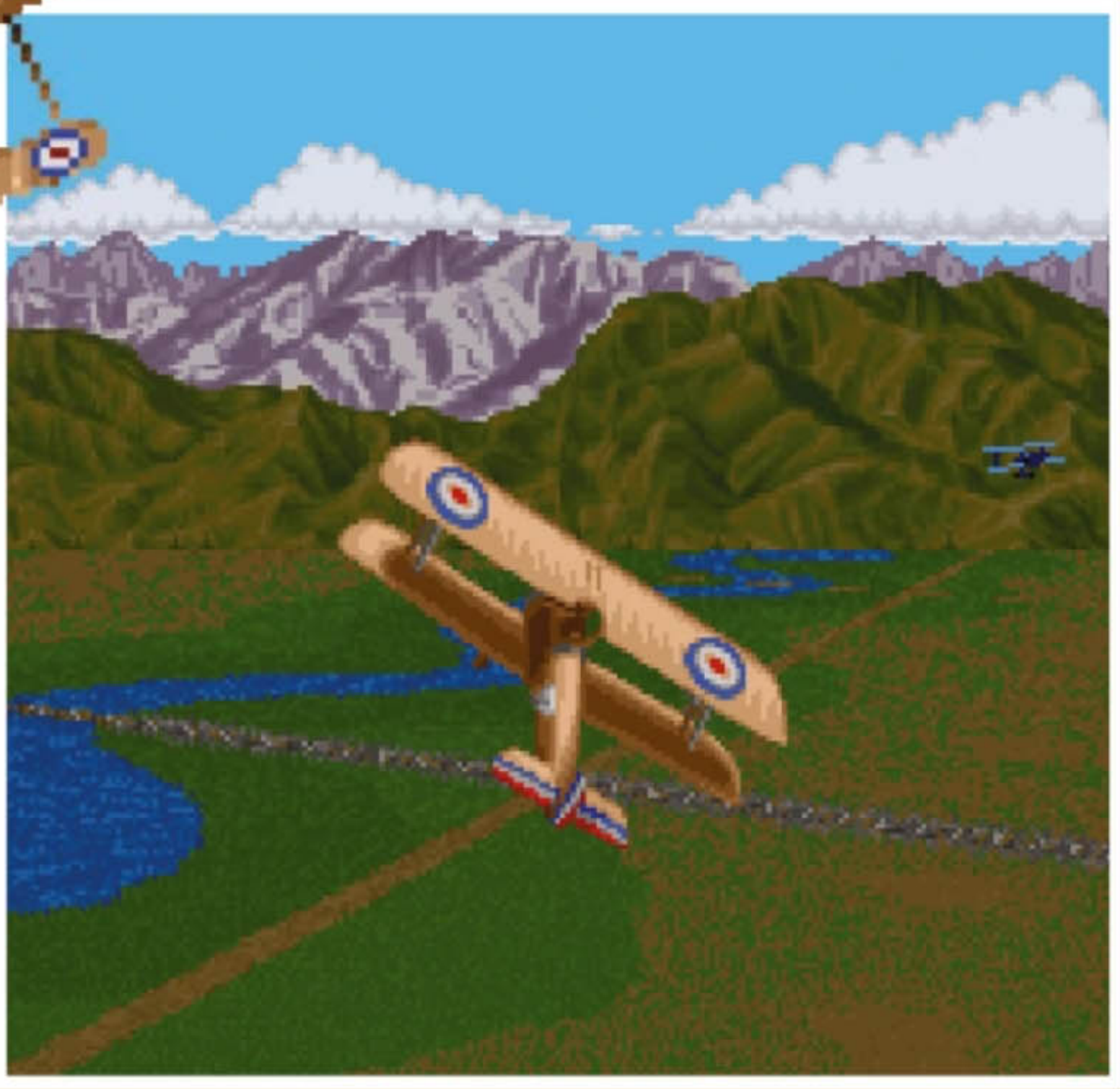
Best Mode 7 moment: Goal!!!
Year: 1992
Publisher: Taito Corporation
Developer: In-house

On The Ball is an on point SNES conversion of Taito's superb 1989 arcade puzzle game *Cameltry*. If you're unfamiliar with it, your objective is to steer a ball through a labyrinth and reach a goal before time expires. As the game progresses, the mazes become more devilish as more obstacles get thrown into the mix, including blocks that knock seconds off your time if you touch them, and traffic light gates that, well, we're sure you all know how traffic lights work. With your players rotating the maze rather than the ball to move it around, *On The Ball* was pretty much built for Mode 7. Thus it's a superb and faithful conversion, and though it could have benefitted from being a little bit longer, is still a must for puzzle fans.

Wings 2: Aces High

Best Mode 7 moment: The map
Year: 1992
Publisher: Namco
Developer: Malibu

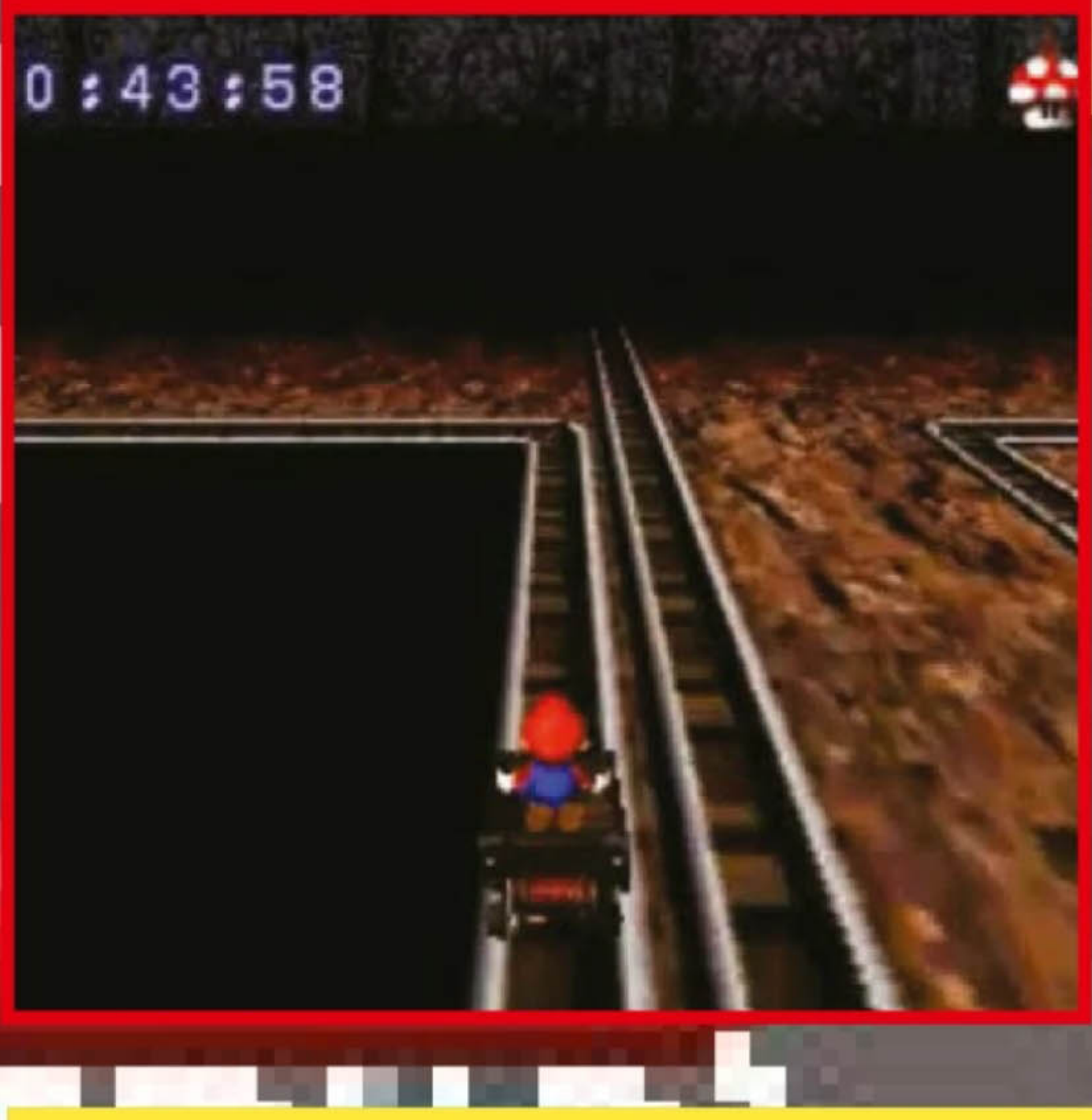
Namco's *Wings 2: Aces High* was WWI placed and made great use of Mode 7. Piloting a WWI biplane, you have to complete a series of bombing and dog fight missions that build up to an aerial battle with the German Top Gun, Red Baron. Mode 7 is used here in two different ways: to create realistic 3D scrolling ground effects as you're flying through the air, and on the bombing missions to zoom the camera towards the floor as your plane flies towards it. The latter is particularly successful as the ground looks crisper the closer you are to it.

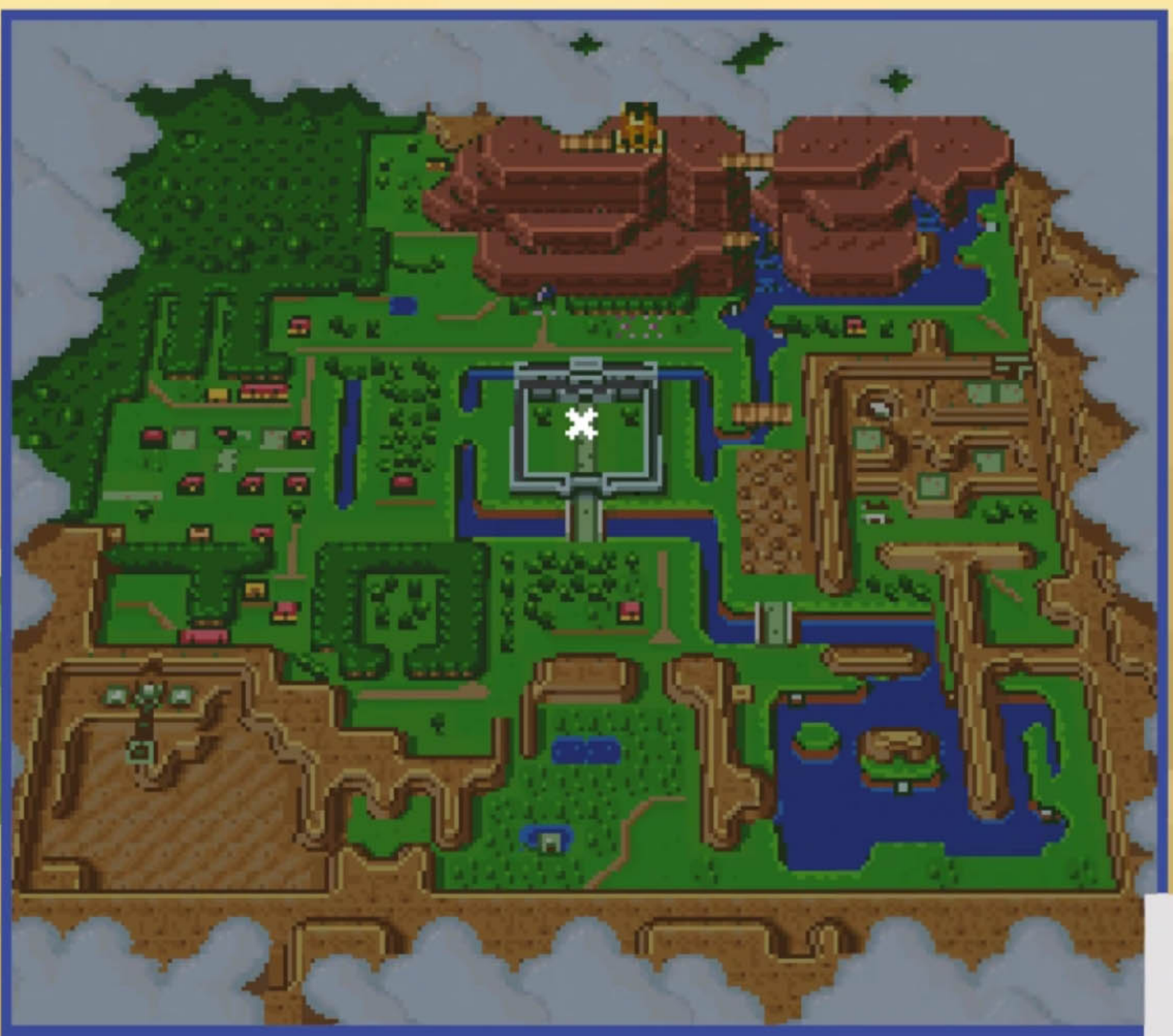


Super Mario RPG: Legend Of The Seven Stars

Best Mode 7 moment: Mine car challenge
Year: 1996
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house

Super Mario RPG is packed with mini-games, but this one is our favourite. Found at the end of the Molehill area, the Mode 7 mine car section serves as both a neat distraction and way to take you to the next section of the adventure. As the car moves on rails (obviously), players have to collect mushrooms and coins and jump any breaks in the track. There are also two Mode 7 side-scrolling sections that add a bit of extra variety to the action too.





The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past

Best Mode 7 moment: Map of Hyrule
Year: 1991
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house

Hyrule is such a big part of any *Zelda* adventure, so it seems fitting that Nintendo would want to do something special with the map screen. The Mode 7 map plays a prominent part in its gameplay and story, with players not only relying on it to get around the huge world but also allowing them to see the full effects and differences between its light and dark incarnations. It is without doubt one of the most iconic and fondly remembered game maps in history.

Mode 7 Mirrors

Mega Drive

The Mega Drive is unable to do Mode 7 but there are games that show the console doing impressive graphics tricks. For a similar rotational effect look at the top-down shooter *Red Zone* in action, or for some exhilarating into-the-screen shooting see *Burning Force*.

Atari Lynx

The Atari Lynx was capable of generating Mode 7-style scaling and rotation effects two years before the Super Nintendo. And the Lynx could actually even go a step better by being able to rotate and scale individual sprites, an effect noticeable in games like *Pit Fighter* and *California Games*.

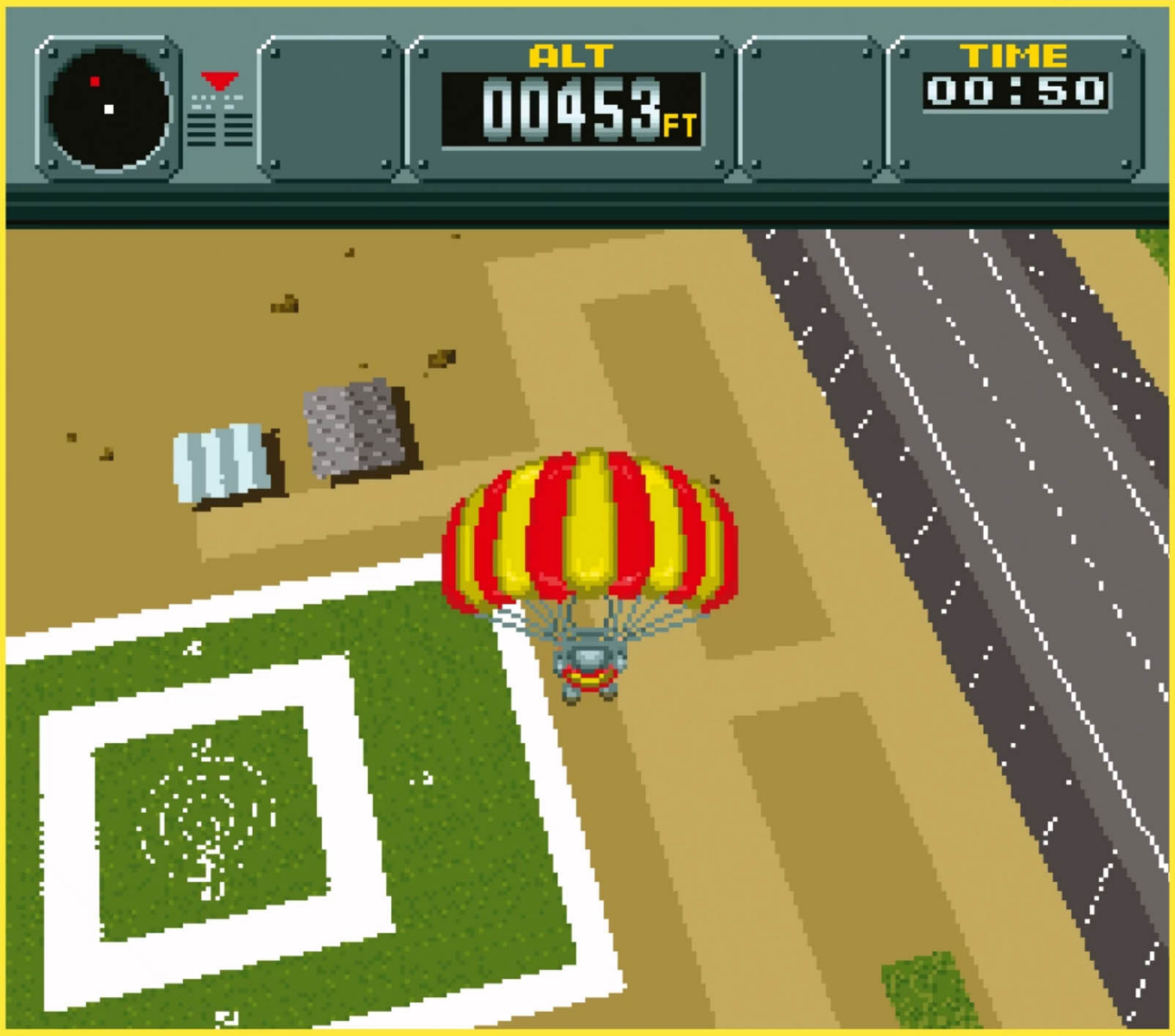
Sega Mega CD

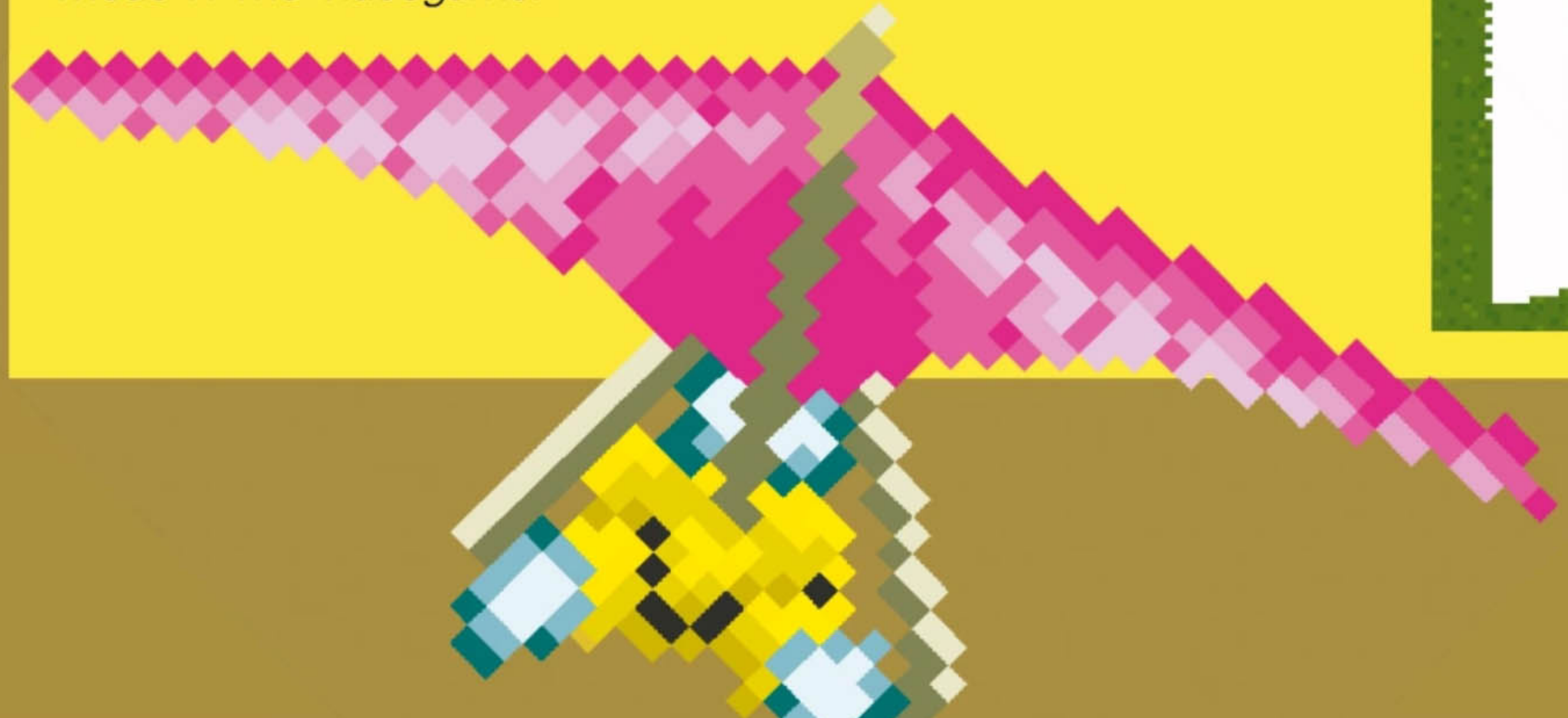
Sega's ill fated CD-Rom add-on for the Mega Drive was capable of Mode 7 effects. Perhaps the most famous example is the 3D bonus stages of *Sonic CD*, which saw Sonic running in a 3D rotating world trying to get those pesky Chaos Emeralds.

Pilotwings

Best Mode 7 moment: Free falling
Year: 1990
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house

Whichever way you cut it, *Pilotwings* just wouldn't have been possible without Mode 7, and that's because here it isn't used to create a fancy background effect, boss or map, but – in a rare instance – an open-feeling world. By Nintendo choosing to base its game in a Flight School rather than the usual po-faced military scenario, it showed that flight sims could be universally fun and accessible. An early release for the Super Nintendo (it was a launch title for the console in the US and Europe), *Pilotwings* was unique. There was nothing really like it on the console market at the time, and it showed perhaps better than any other SNES game the immersive and engaging properties that Mode 7 brought to the table. If you removed Mode 7 from *Pilotwings* then the screen would be as empty and as black as space… or a better metaphor: nothingness. In *Pilotwings*, Mode 7 hardly ever sleeps. It's always in the background working away and showing off the impressive rotation and scaling effects it could generate. For all intents and purposes, *Pilotwings* is *Mode 7: The Videogame*.

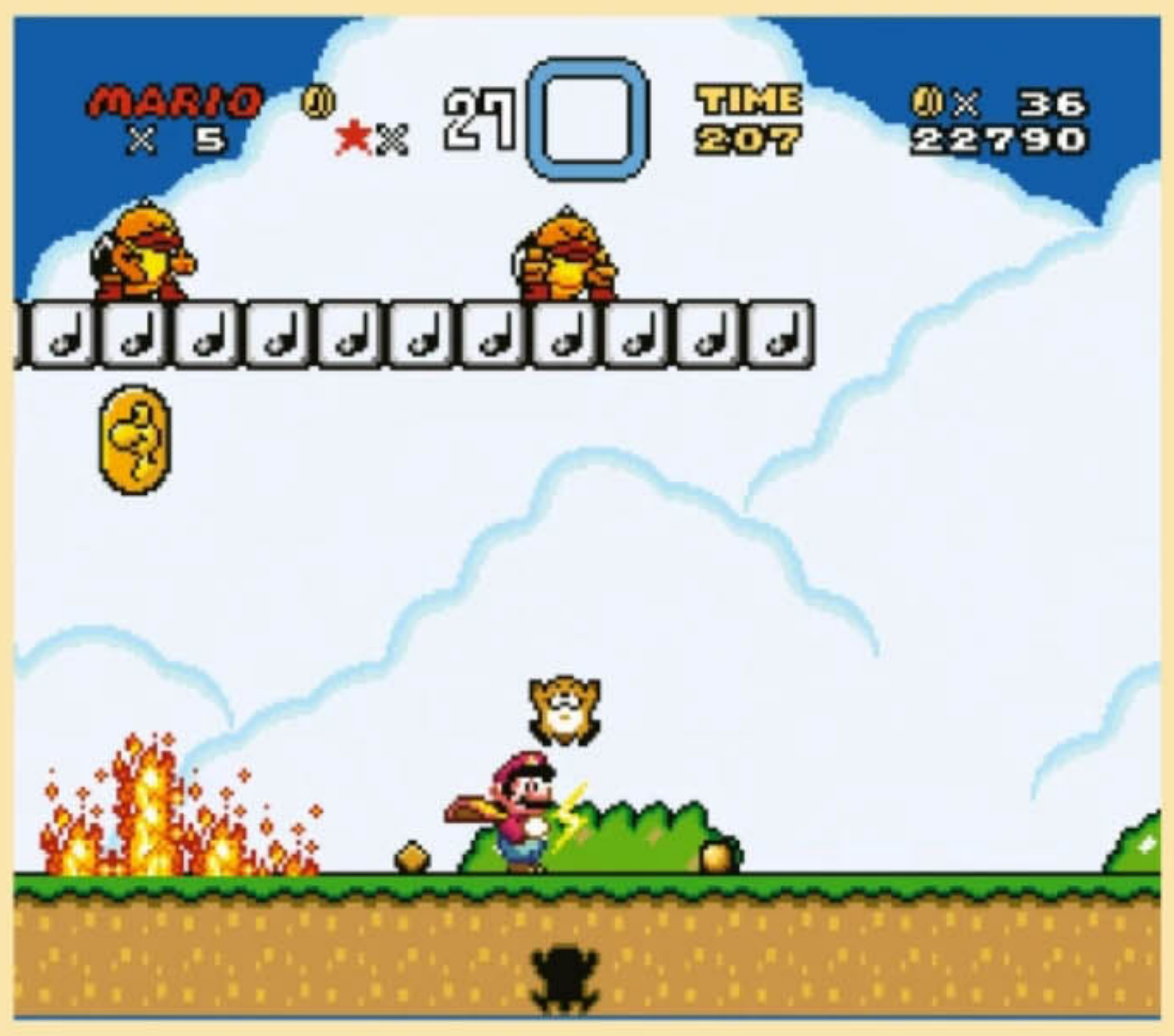




SUPER MARIO WORLD

Nintendo's magnum opus sold over 20 million copies and helped launch the Super Nintendo. Nick Thorpe takes a look back at one of the greatest platformers of all time

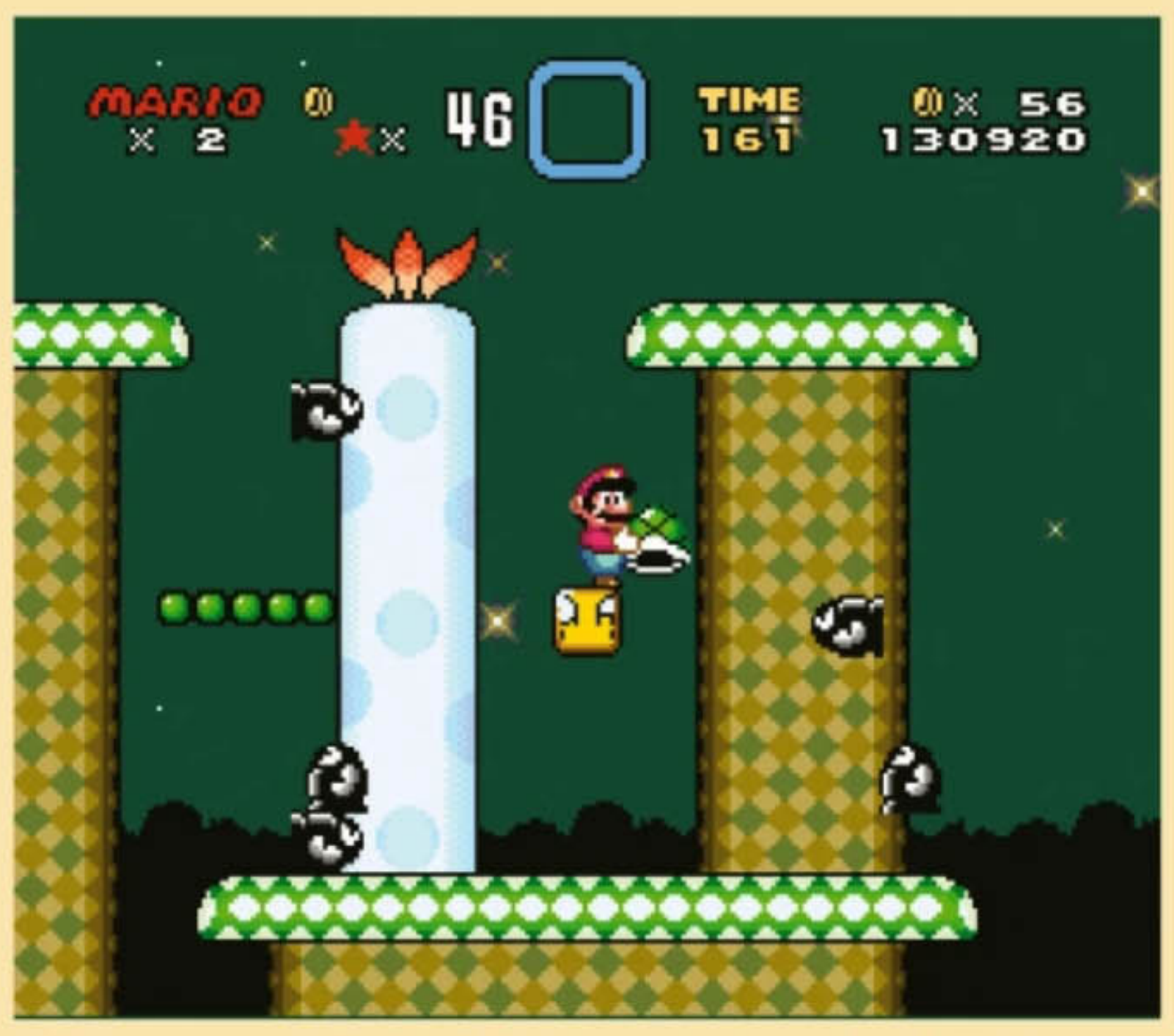
When Nintendo finally entered the 16-bit console race in November 1990, it was in the unfamiliar position of having to stake its claim to market leadership against real competition. The company responded in typical fashion, by launching the Super Famicom with possibly the greatest one-two punch in videogame history. The turbo-charged Mode 7 racer *F-Zero* offered plenty of substance, but its appeal hinged on style and the lure of the unfamiliar. It was Nintendo's way of demonstrating technological superiority. On the other hand, *Super Mario World* definitely looked the part, but its main function was to provide substance and familiarity (in fact, the game bore the subtitle *Super Mario Bros. 4* in Japan). With it, Nintendo intended to reaffirm its position as the world's leading developer of videogames – and it succeeded.



» Sumo Brothers are challenging – they'll hammer lightning downwards, setting the ground below ablaze.

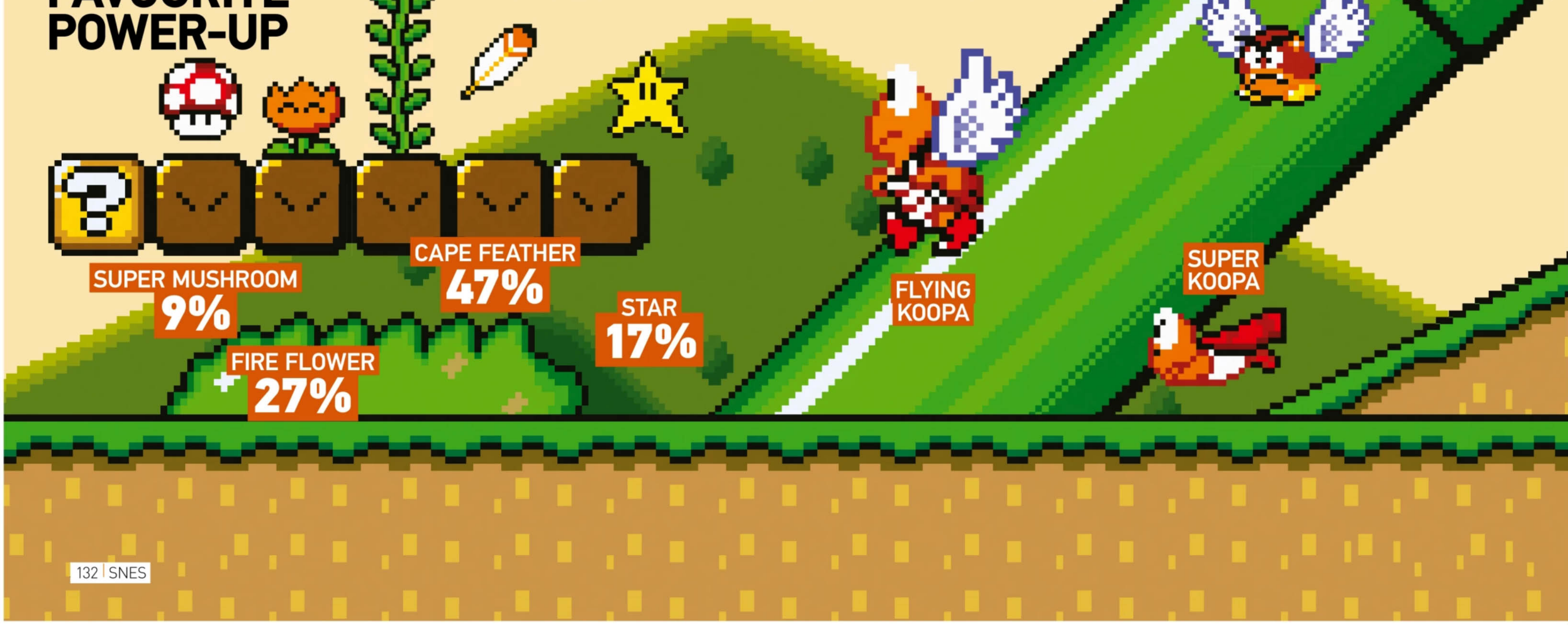
To advance the game past its superb predecessors, Nintendo assigned a mixture of veteran hands and new talent to develop *Super Mario World*. Of the 15-strong team that developed the game, nine were returning from *Super Mario Bros. 3* and one had previously worked on *Super Mario Bros. 2*, while the remaining five had no prior credits and injected some fresh insight. The other major change was a new lead game director – in this case Takashi Tezuka, who had previously served alongside Shigeru Miyamoto as an assistant director and later co-director. Miyamoto himself remained on the development team, but stepped back into the less hands-on role of a producer.

As far as the basic game design is concerned, the team wisely decided not to fix what wasn't broken. The block-based level designs are familiar to anyone that has played a *Mario* game, and Mario's skills and abilities are largely drawn from *Super Mario Bros. 3*, albeit with a few tweaks. The variety of special forms was scaled back to Fire Mario and Caped Mario (a new form, but one functionally similar to Raccoon Mario), and Mario retained the ability to kick carried items but could not boot them skyward. Other than that, the ▶

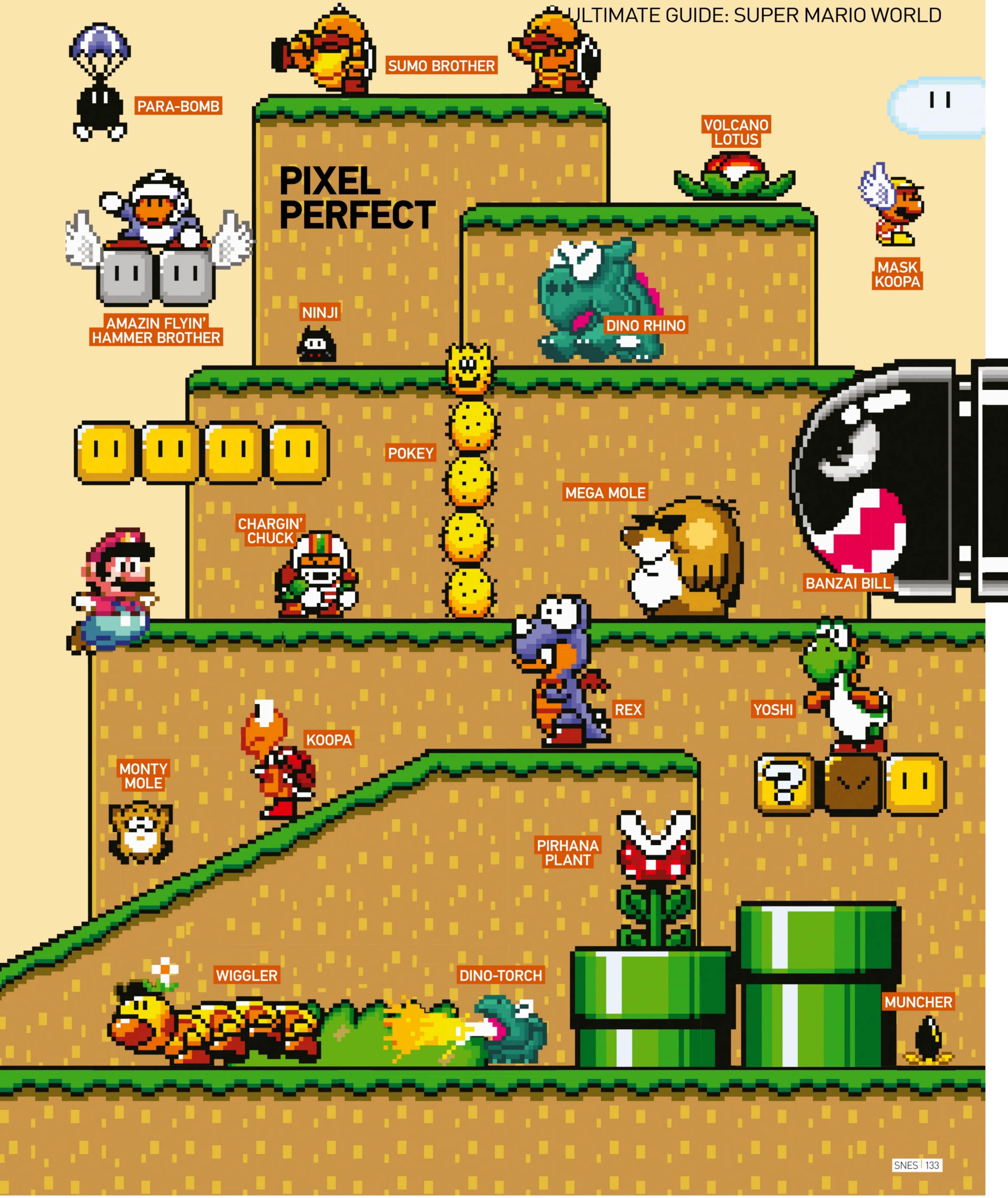


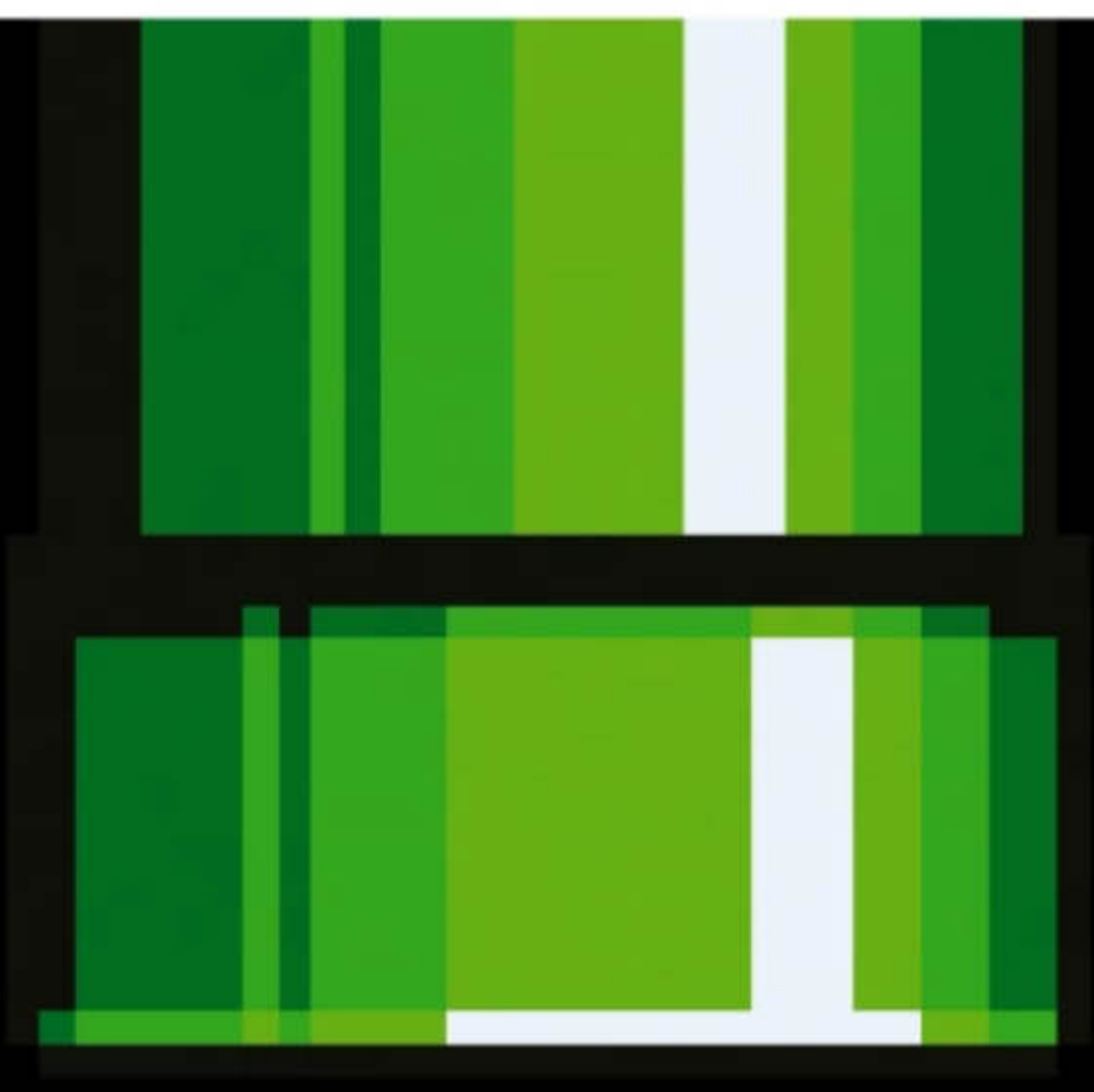
» This swarm of Bullet Bills is testament to the fact that there's a real challenge present.

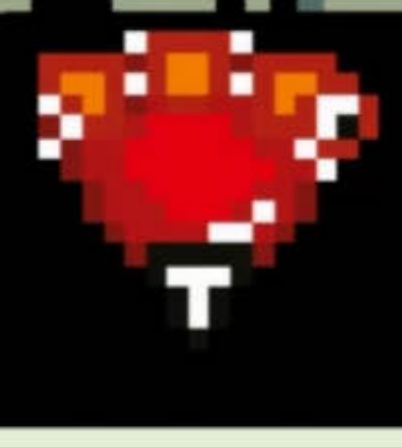
YOUR FAVOURITE POWER-UP



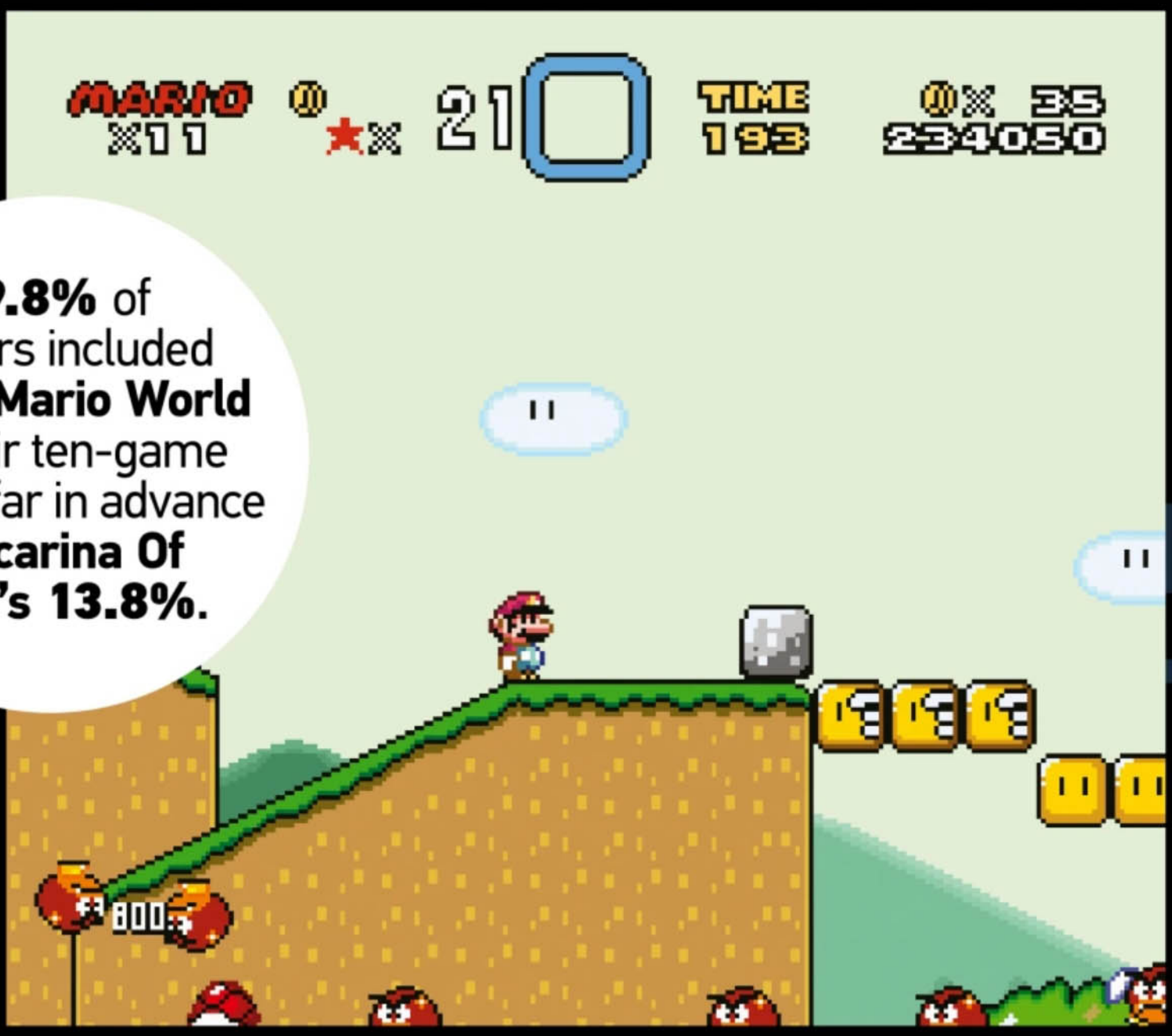
PIXEL PERFECT


PARA-BOMB
SUMO BROTHER
VOLCANO LOTUS
MASK KOOPA
AMAZIN FLYIN' HAMMER BROTHER
NINJI
DINO RHINO
POKEY
MEGA MOLE
CHARGIN' CHUCK
BANZAI BILL
REX
YOSHI
KOOPA
MONTY MOLE
PIRHANA PLANT
WIGGLER
DINO-TORCH
MUNCHER





GAME BOY ADVANCE



» *Super Mario World* offers visual cues – these slopes make the solution to this line of enemies obvious.

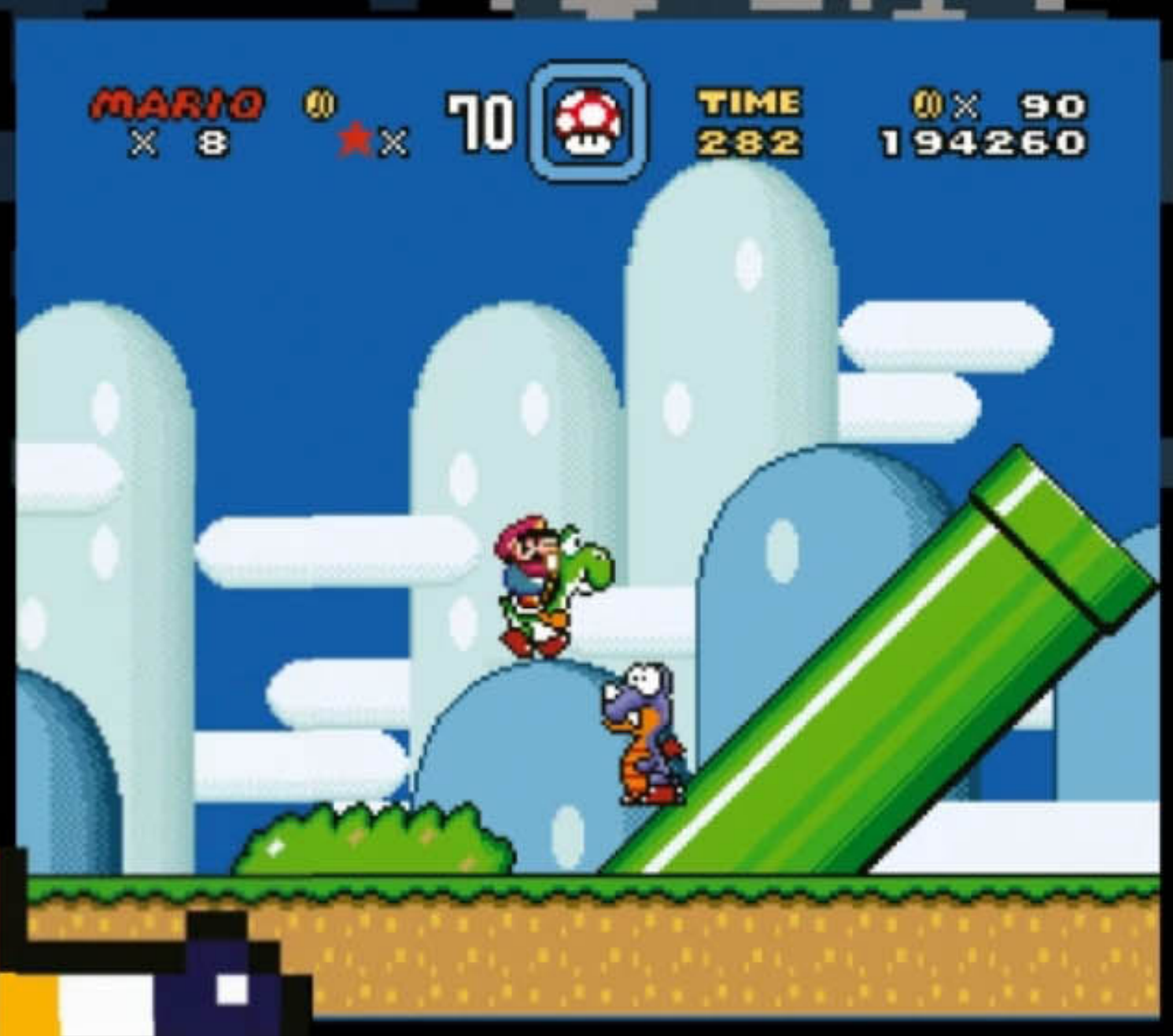
19.8% of readers included **Super Mario World** on their ten-game ballot – far in advance of **Ocarina Of Time's 13.8%.**

▶ portly plumber gained a new companion in the form of Yoshi, a dinosaur that will grant him a ride and eat quite a few of the enemies that stand in his way.

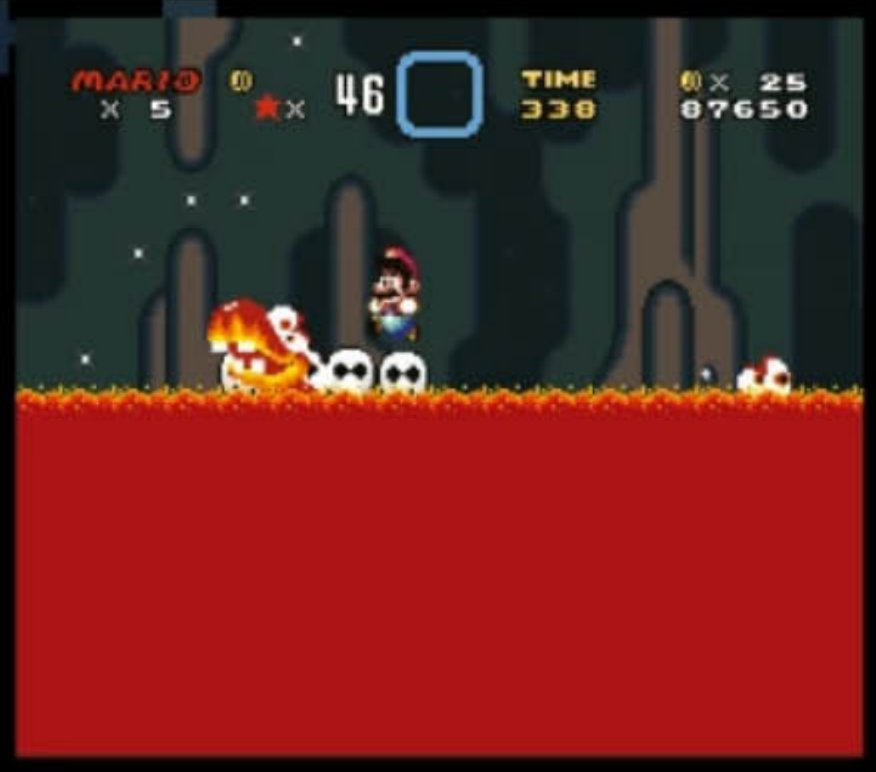
The major innovation of *Super Mario World* was its structure. *Super Mario Bros.* had introduced the concept of multiple stage exits with its Warp Zones, and *Super Mario Bros. 3* had introduced a world map to the series. What *Super Mario World* did was to combine the two concepts into a non-linear experience. Whenever a stage had more than one exit, there was usually a good reason to seek that extra exit – at the very minimum it could lead to a secret stage, but it might also lead to a warp or even one of the game's Switch Palace stages. When completed, each of the four Switch Palaces activated appropriately coloured blocks throughout the game – you could tell where they were meant to be thanks to the appearance of their coloured outlines. Often they just made things a little easier by blocking off pits or providing extra platforms, but occasionally they would be crucial to making progress.

In retrospect, *Super Mario World* is surprisingly economical with its resources, given its status as a showcase game for a new console. Take the game's music as an example – Koji Kondo's soundtrack makes excellent use of theme and variation. When you first hear the overworld music, you get your first experience of a melody that persists throughout the game, forming the basis for almost every piece of action music from the underground and underwater stages to the castles and ghost houses. Likewise, while it's always visually enticing, *Super Mario World*'s wealth of levels means that it inevitably reuses backgrounds and objects frequently. What's more, the game makes sparse use of the console's advanced graphical features – where other designers might be tempted to design in such a way that highlights them, transparency and Mode 7 scaling and rotation are only deployed where they make sense in the context of the game design.

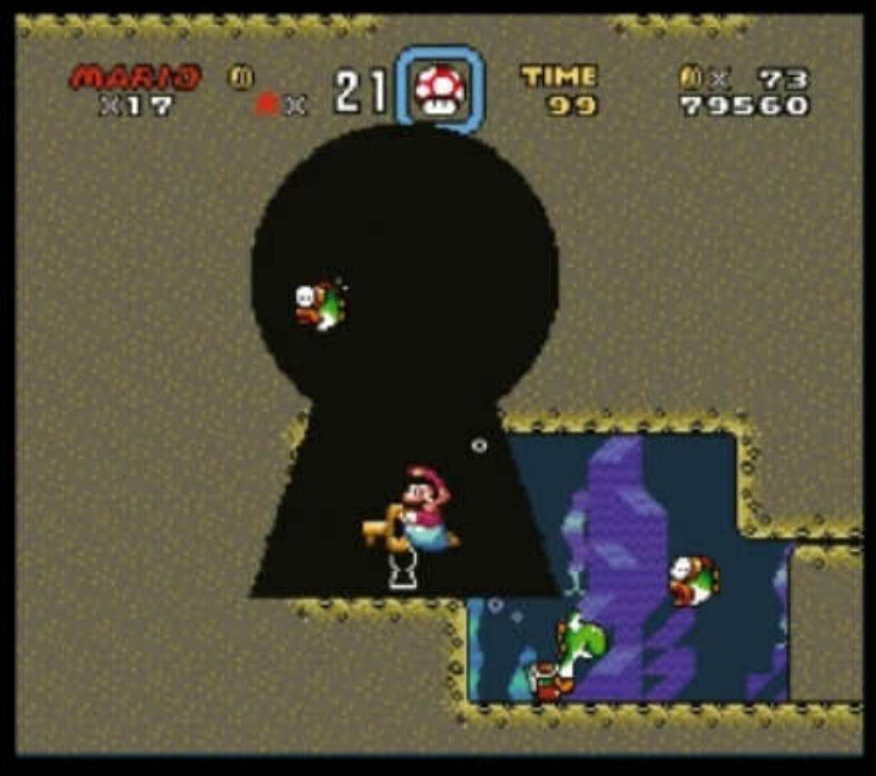
That's the real genius of *Super Mario World*, though – it is a textbook example of a design team managing to make a lot from a little, because fresh ideas are never in short supply. You can take the scenic route through the game, taking in as many stages as possible on the way to the climactic fight with Bowser, and never encounter the contempt that repetition breeds. When you encounter a tense section in which you hop between moving platforms as buzzsaws hurtle towards you, that's the only time it'll happen. Even late in the game, you'll find new ideas, like a maze built from overlapping



» Mario's new dinosaur pal stomps enemies efficiently, but gains far more from eating them.



» Blargg is a sneaky foe, checking that you're approaching before it emerges from the lava.



» Secret exits are the key to *Super Mario World*'s long-term appeal (pun definitely intended).

GAME BOY ADVANTAGE

Super Mario World only has one non-emulated conversion and Super Mario Advance 2: Super Mario World is certainly interesting…

When Nintendo chose to bring *Super Mario World* to the Game Boy Advance back in 2001, it came across with a variety of changes. The most notable of these is related to Luigi. As well as using his revised sprites from the *Super Mario All-Stars* edition of *Super Mario World*, he's got his high jump and slippery run back from previous games. Other characters have also had a graphical touch-up, and the visuals have been brightened all-round due to the lack of a backlight in the original Game Boy Advance model. While the music has all been retained, there are definite differences in sound due to the differences in sound hardware between the SNES and Game Boy Advance. However, Mario, Luigi, the Koopalings and the Boos have all gained voices. There's also a brand new intro sequence featuring Mario, Luigi and Peach.

In terms of game design, a few changes have been made – Dragon Coins have been added to stages that didn't previously feature them, and your spin jump protects you from more enemies than in the original. Once you've encountered a coloured Yoshi, you can find them in regular stages by finding an egg with certain power-ups. Additionally, if you've got the cape or fire powers, taking a hit won't send you straight back to your small form. The game can also be saved at any time. No matter which version you play, *Super Mario World* is an amazing game, but the changes may cause purists to stick to the original SNES version.

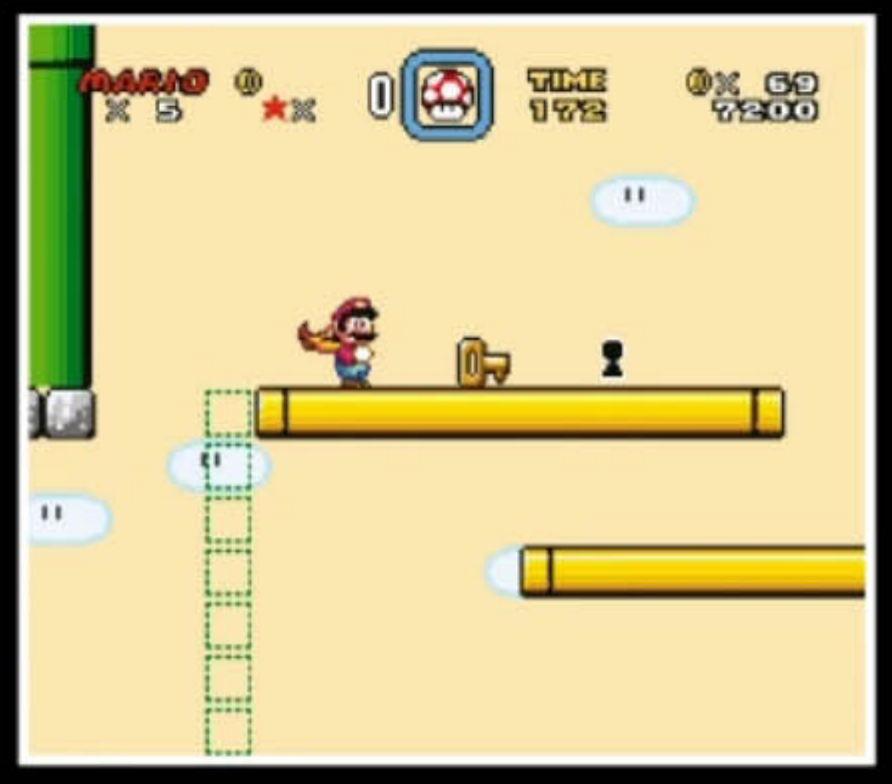
BUZZY BEETLE

PORCU-PUFFER

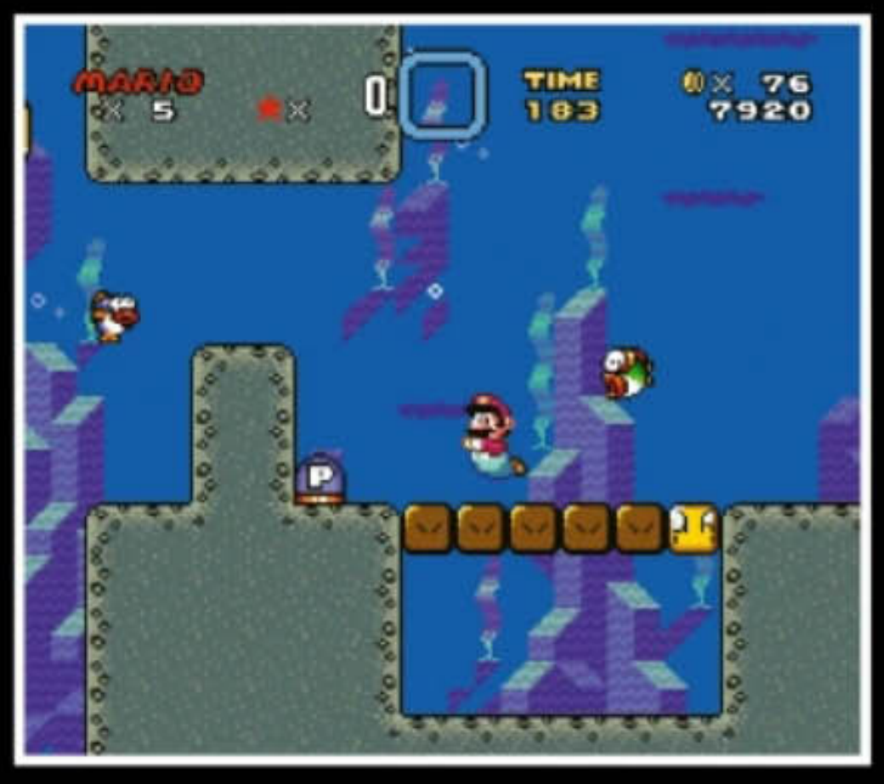
RIP VAN FISH

THE SHORTEST ROAD

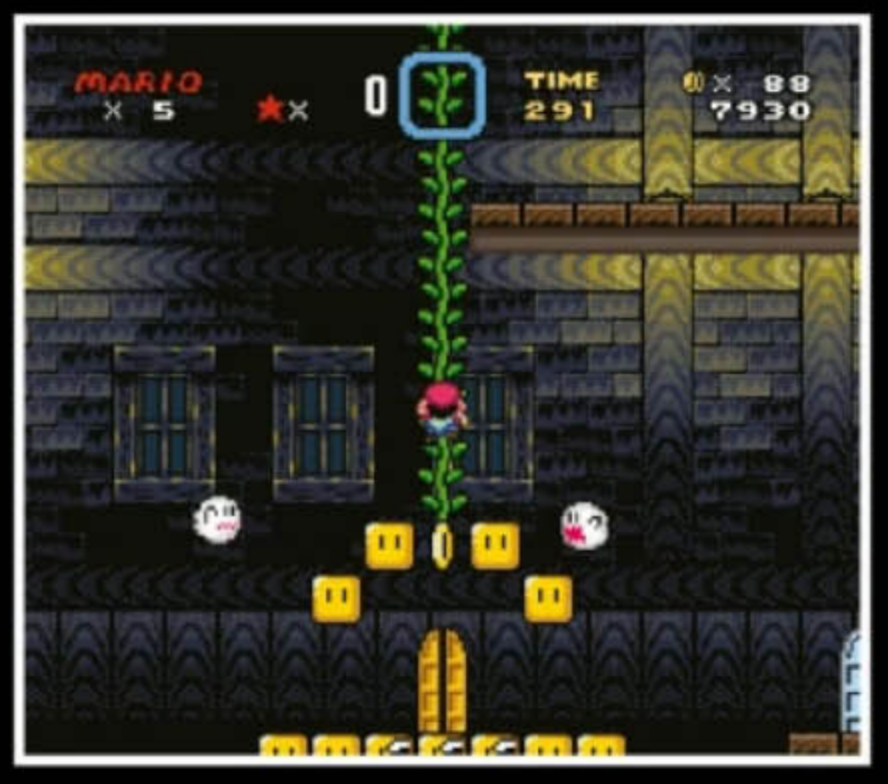
Do you want to beat this classic, but are pressed for time? Worry not – with this guide, you'll have the game finished quick



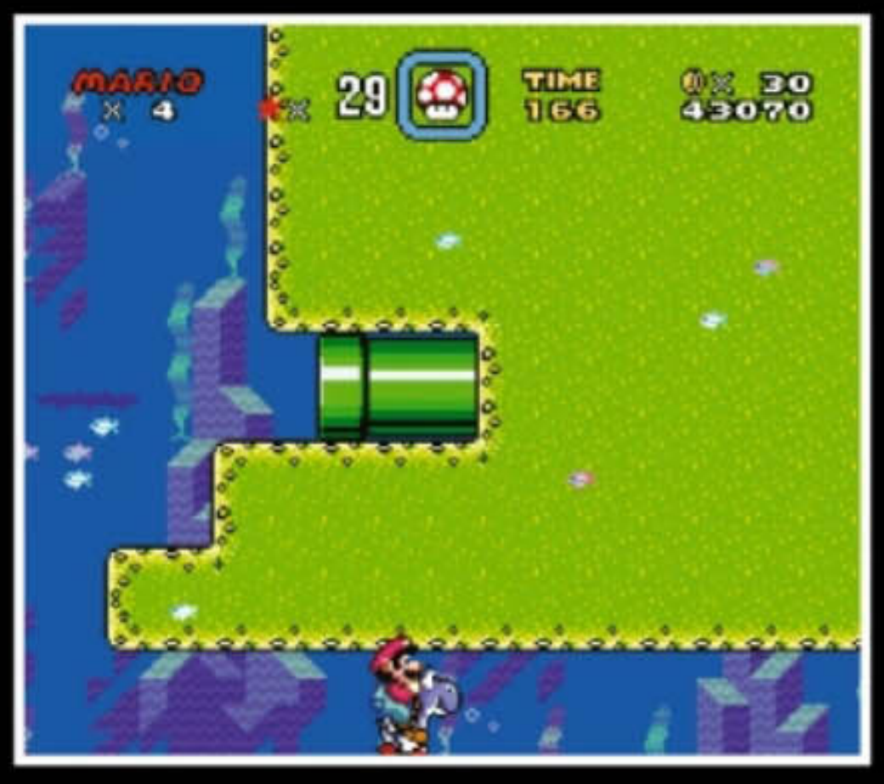
1 Start with Yoshi's Island 2 and play normally until you reach Donut Plains 1. Once you get there, grab a cape from a Super Koopa. Use it to fly to the key near the end of the stage for a secret exit.



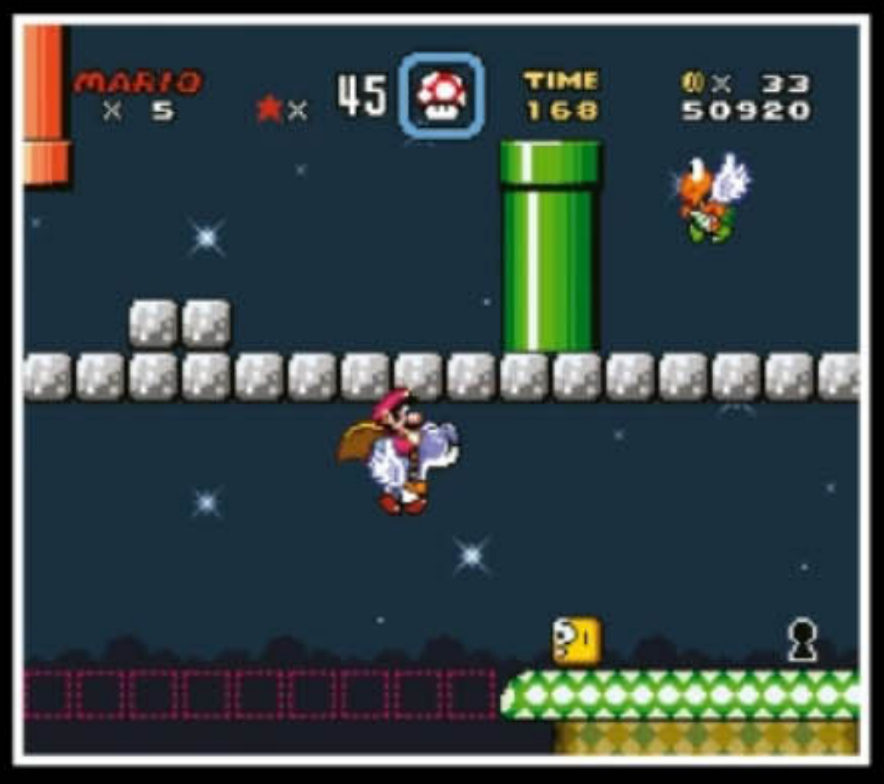
2 In Donut Secret 1, you'll need to find another secret exit – you can do this by finding a P Switch, then using it to turn these blocks into coins so you can retrieve the key from the Question Block.



3 Donut Secret House has a hidden boss fight – you'll need to trigger this vine, pictured above, then use a P Switch to reveal a door at the top. Beat the Big Boo and you'll gain access to Star Road.



4 Beat each Star World stage by finding its secret exit. In Star World 2, you can acquire a blue Yoshi which gains the ability to fly when its mouth is full – make sure you leave the stage with it.



5 In Star World 4, use your Yoshi to fly beneath a section of blocks to reach the exit. You can now access Bowser's Castle and beat the game, having seen just 12 of the game's 72 stages.

> **"Super Mario World is surprisingly economical with its resources"**

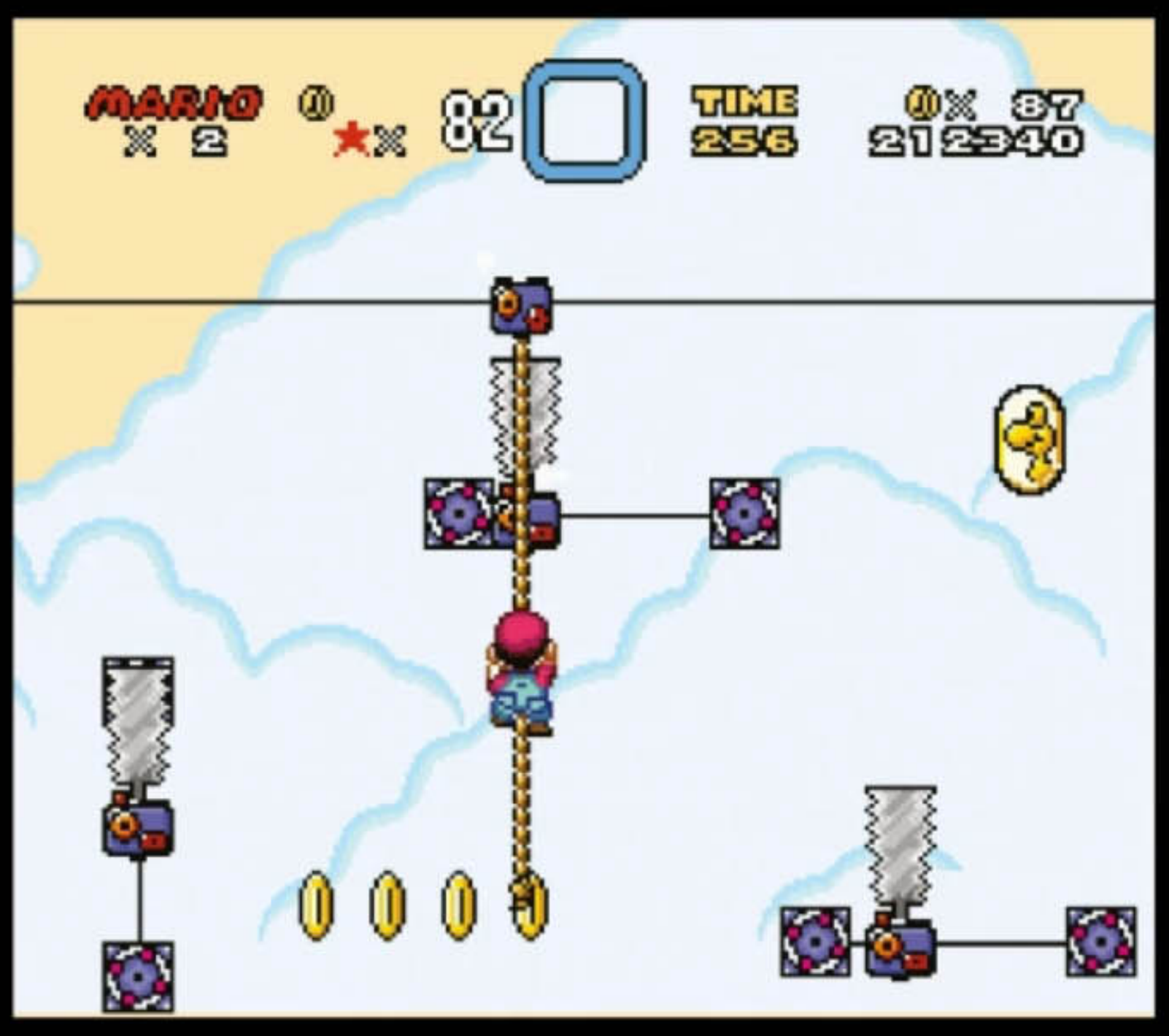
layers of moving rock. Those ideas which are re-used, such as the new puzzle-centric Ghost House stages, are presented in ways which leave each encounter feeling distinct.

What's all the more surprising is that this level of creativity is found in the series' fourth game. Some of it can be attributed to the power of the SNES allowing the designers to do things that had previously proven impossible, and the addition of a save battery certainly enabled the enormous game world to be realised. However, credit must also go to the development team for breaking new ground when it would have been easy to just provide a slightly prettier version of what had gone before.

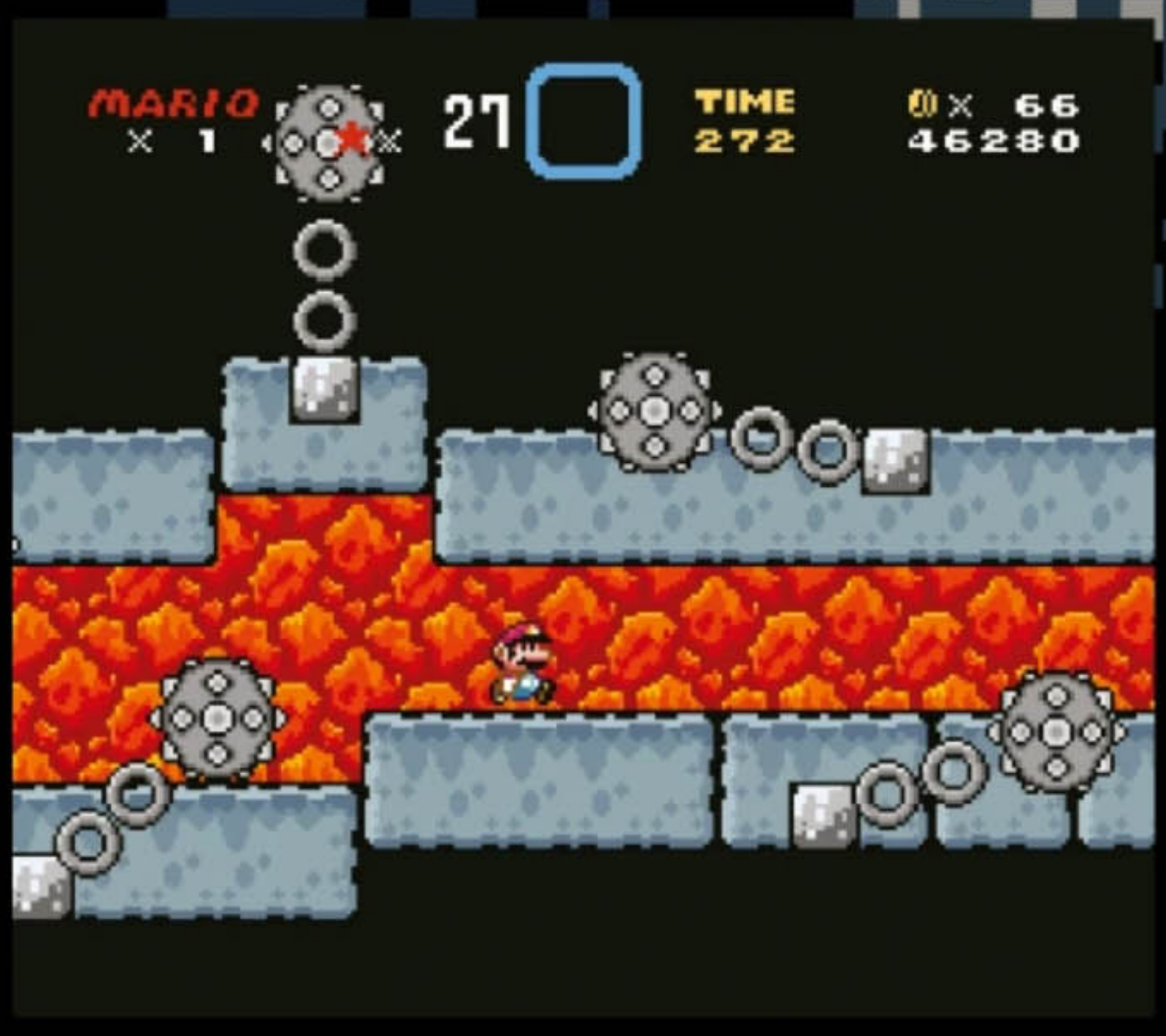
But *Super Mario World* was all the more special because it represented the end of an era, as the last traditional 2D *Mario* platformer to hit a home console for many a year. *Yoshi's Island* was a marked departure from the traditional Mario style, and Nintendo took its mascot into the world of 3D for his next major console game. By the time Mario's side-scrolling adventures returned in the *New Super Mario Bros.* series, traditional pixel art and chiptunes had been left behind and things never quite felt the same.

According to your votes, *Super Mario World* is the greatest game of all time. It's not hard to see why, because it comprises all the things about gaming that people love. It looks nice, sounds wonderful and is masterfully designed, offering players an experience that can be enjoyed in whichever way they prefer. If you want depth and discovery, *Super Mario World* can give you that. If you want to make your way to the end as quickly as possible through brute force, that's allowed too. It represents familiarity, as a sequel featuring one of the most recognisable characters not just in gaming, but in all of pop culture. However, as a launch game, it also represents the thrill of new things – that unforgettable rush of excitement you experienced when you saw hardware doing things you'd never thought possible, and the unbounded possibilities that presented themselves in your mind as a result. It's a game that can be – and has been – enjoyed by players of all ages, from all over the world.

Shared nostalgia is what brings us together as retro gamers, and according to you lot, no other game appeals quite so broadly. All hail Mario – the King Of Games. ★

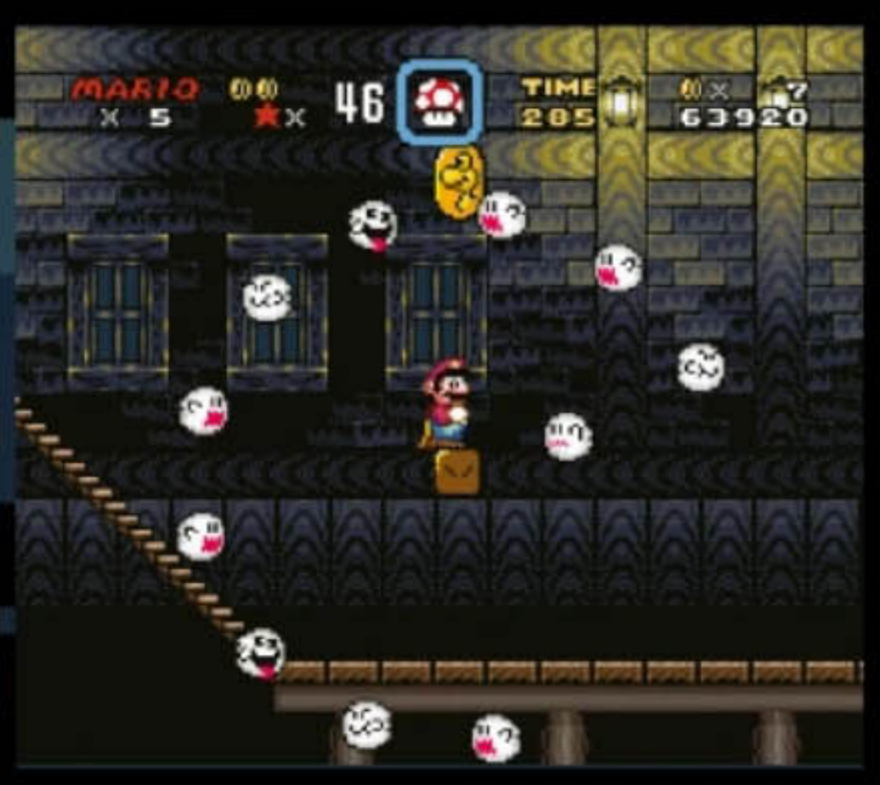


» Hanging off a dangling rope while avoiding buzzsaws is a unique thrill – it only comes up once.



» The boss themes use the same melody as the action stages, but they feel completely different.

BOO BUDDIES



» Ghost Houses typically offer simple obstacles but tricky navigation, requiring brainpower over quick reflexes.

BONY BEETLE

TORPEDO TED

Q&A: ROBERT FENNELL

Known online as GreenDeathFlavor, this speedrunner shares his insight on demolishing Mario's finest game

When did you first encounter *Super Mario World,* and what did you make of it?
My first encounter with *Super Mario World* happened in 1992, when we got a Super Nintendo and my siblings and I were playing in the living room. I was a Mario kid – we had all of the *Mario* games. My best *Mario* memory is when I was first in our house to beat *Super Mario Bros.*.

What's your fastest completion time for *Super Mario World,* and how did you achieve it?
My fastest completion is in 9 minutes 47 seconds (9:47.58). I achieved that in January 2015, breaking a tie between myself and dram55 when we both had a personal best of exactly 9:48.98.

The run was done using a glitch in the game known as the 'cloud glitch'. When Mario collects a coin that Yoshi is about to eat, it gets replaced by the next available sprite, in this case, the Chargin' Chuck. Chargin' Chucks have the ability to give power-ups when eaten. In 2014, it was discovered that you can eat a Chargin' Chuck as small Mario and the game will give you a Lakitu cloud. The Lakitu cloud is useful because it can manipulate Bowser in the Bowser fight, making him stop instantly when it's moving off-screen to the left. This means you can complete the final battle up to a minute faster.

In January I finally got a solid run with a good Bowser battle which resulted in a new record which has stood for ten months now, but is beatable. The record could very well come down a full second or more with a perfect run.

Why is *Super Mario World* such a good game to speedrun?
I believe it's a good game to speedrun because it's a relatively easy game to learn. A lot of levels are beatable by just flying over them. There's also a lot of variety with this game. If you're looking for a fast easy run you can do any level. If you're looking for something a bit longer you can do no Star World. Of course, there's 96-Exit where you beat every level in the game. You could even challenge yourself with the no cape category.

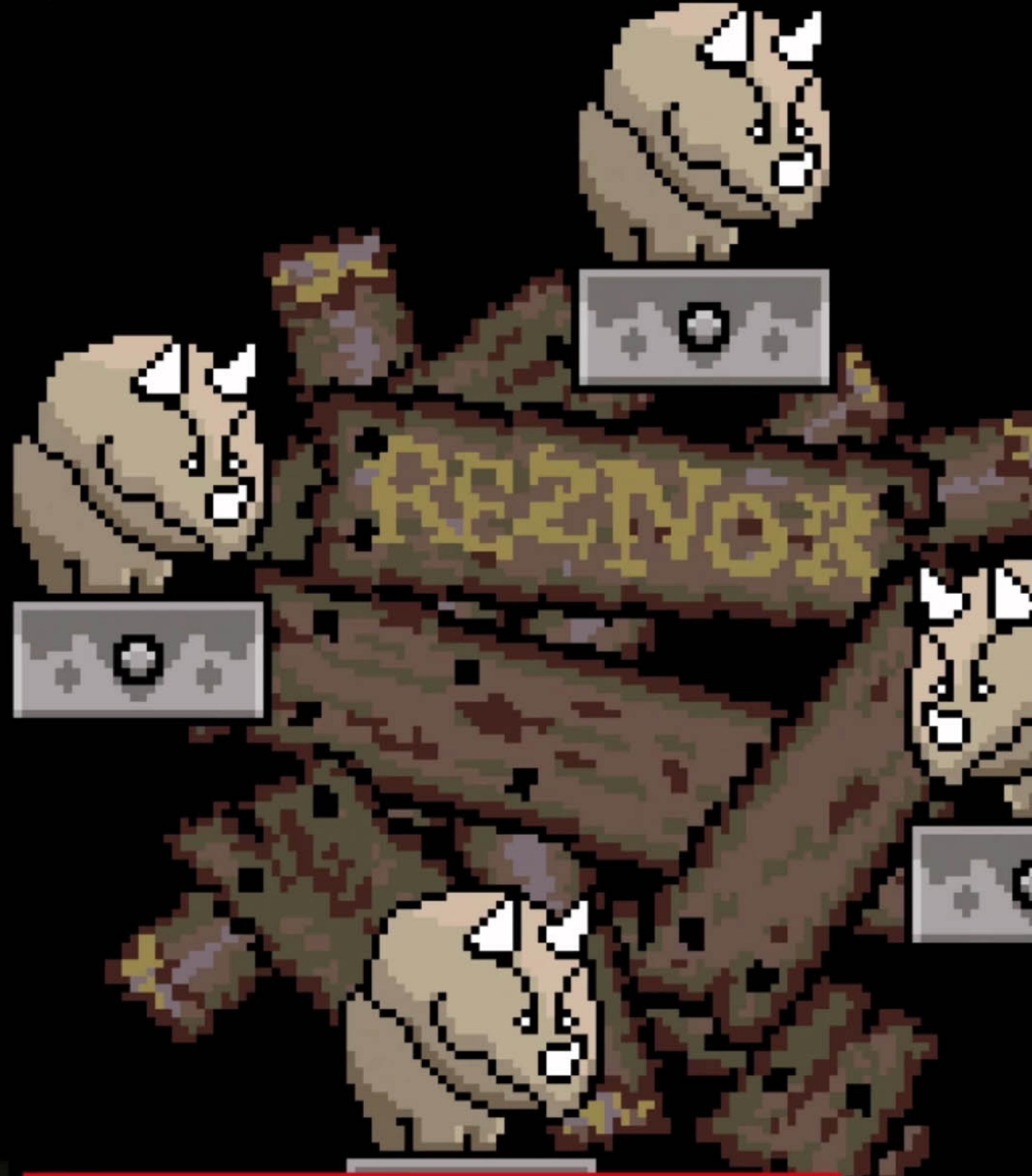
What techniques are essential for any *Super Mario World* speedrunner to succeed?
You should play through the game a bit to get used to the game and its physics. Then practice every level and watch videos to learn new strategies. New runners can find videos for every level on smwwiki.com. I like to use a lot of visual and sound cues. I think it's important to find these cues for executing moves with tight input windows. When you have all the basics down you can begin to study and learn glitches if your goal is to get a fast time.

If you really get into *SMW* speedrunning and learn everything then it's all about the grind. You can't get record overnight, you need to put in a lot of attempts. When I first started I had times of over eleven minutes. It took me about a year and a half before I got world record in my category, so patience is definitely required.

BLARGG

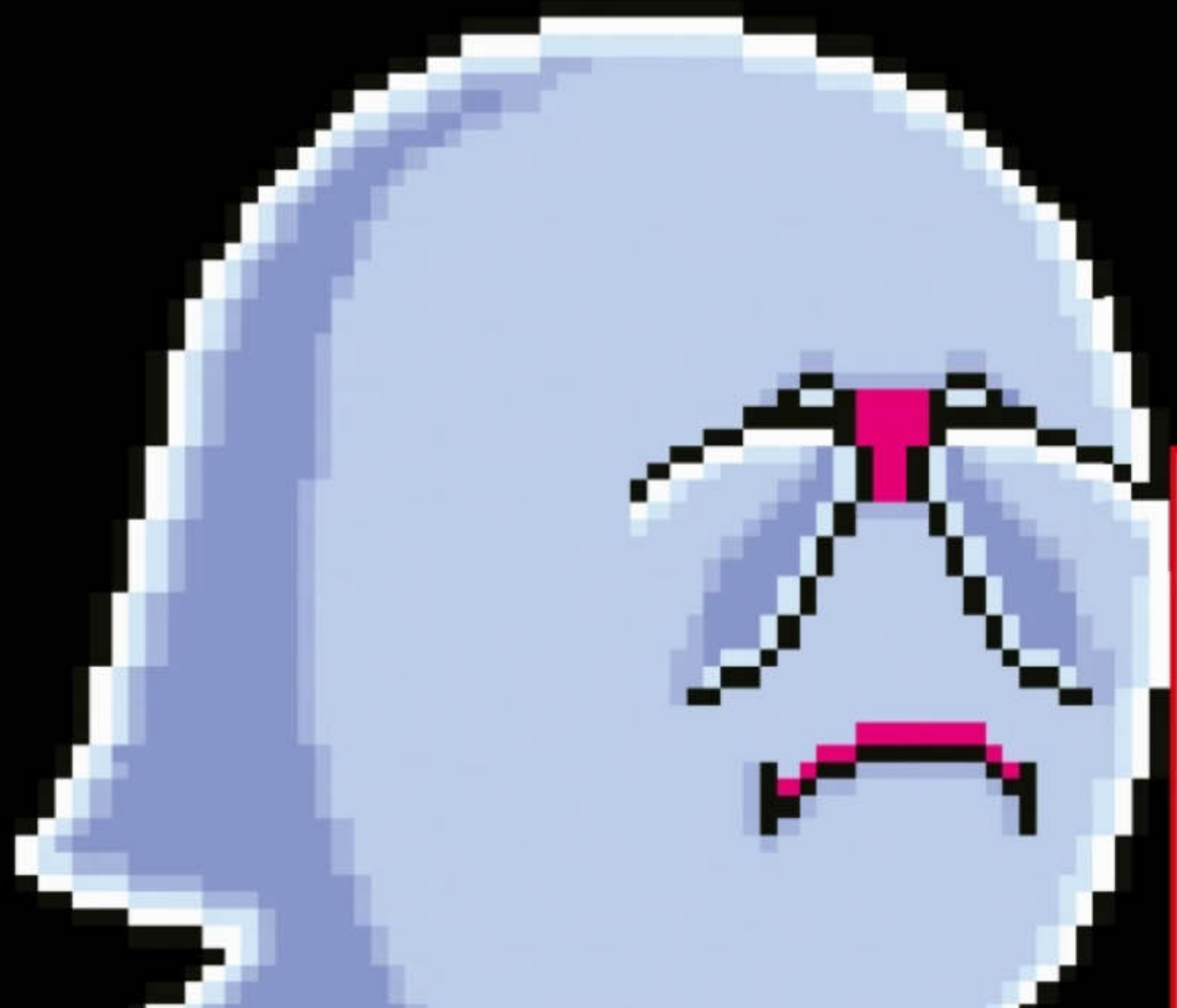
BOSS RUSH

What kind of hero would Mario be if he didn't bring down a few behemoths on his travels? Here's a rogue's gallery of the miscreants he comes up against in Super Mario World



REZNOR

1 This quartet of fire-breathing triceratops stands atop a set of rotating platforms. You'll need to bump them from underneath, but watch out! Once you've knocked a couple of them from their platforms, the ground beneath you will start to give way. If you can't take out the remaining beasts, you'll need to hitch a ride on their carousel in order to finish them off. Oh, and if you were wondering, Reznor *is* named after the Nine Inch Nails frontman, Trent Reznor.

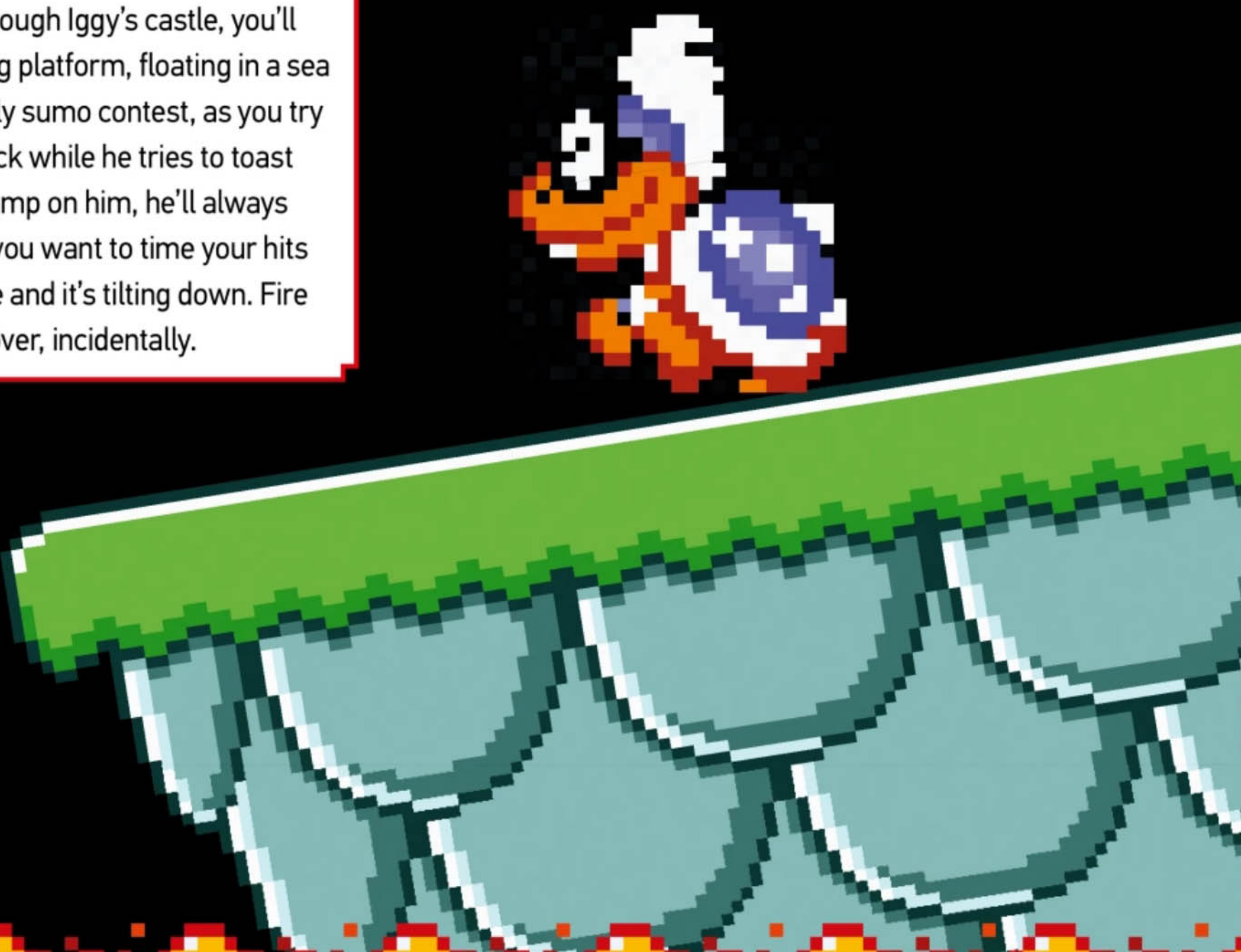


BIG BOO

2 Mario spends most of his time running away from these ghostly baddies, but the Big Boo resident in Donut Secret House is an aggressive sort. Unlike his compatriots elsewhere, he's capable of disappearing at will and is accompanied by a couple of regular Boos. You'll need to pick up Grab Blocks from below and throw them upwards at Big Boo, but they'll only hit when he turns visible. Three hits should be enough to see him off for good.

IGGY KOOPA

3 After battling your way through Iggy's castle, you'll encounter him atop a tilting platform, floating in a sea of lava. What follows is a deadly sumo contest, as you try to push him into the molten rock while he tries to toast you with fireballs. When you jump on him, he'll always slide downwards – so ideally, you want to time your hits for when he's close to the edge and it's tilting down. Fire Mario makes this fight a walkover, incidentally.

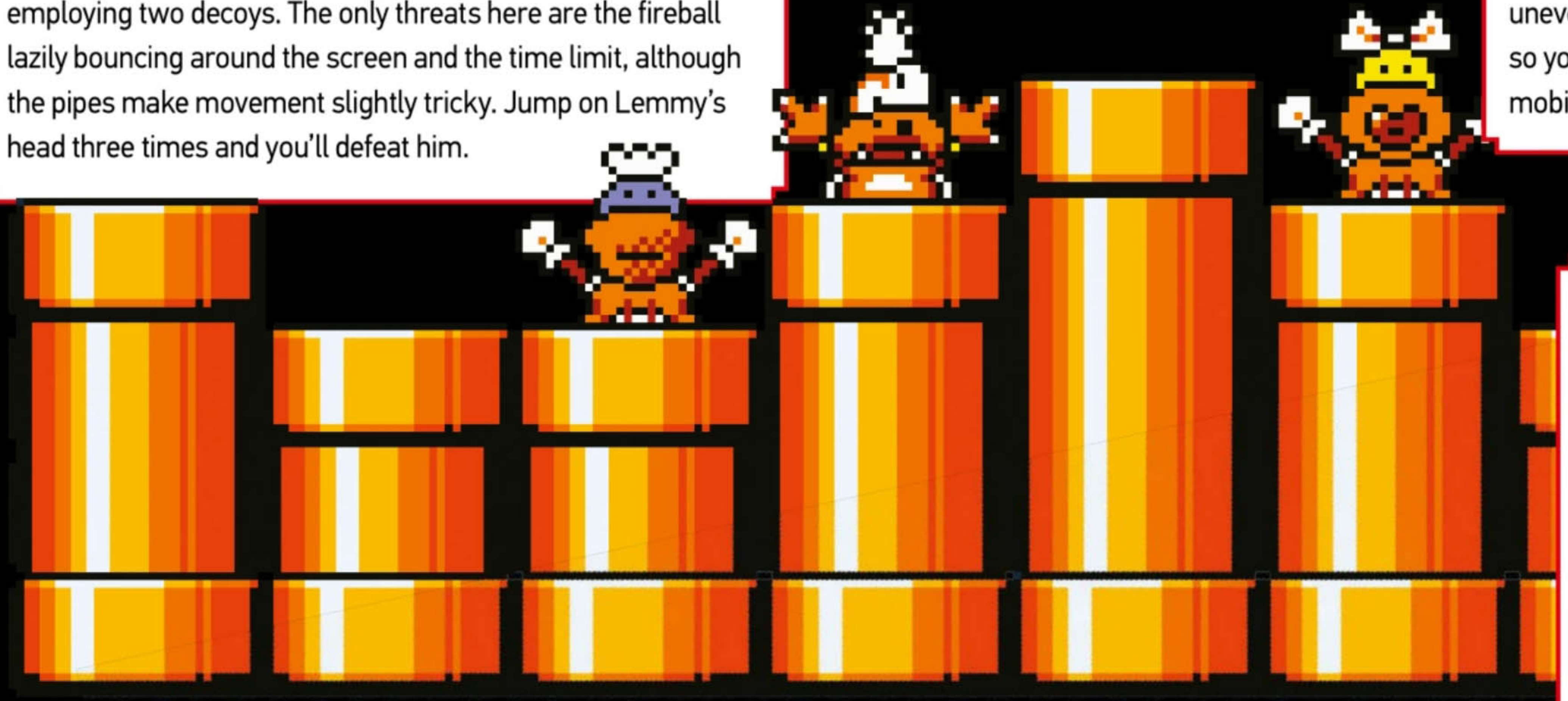


MORTON KOOPA

4 Your mere presence is enough to drive Morton up the wall – literally, as he runs towards the wall and then runs straight up it and onto the ceiling. Once he's up there, you'd better keep moving as he's going to try to jump down onto you. When he lands, turn the tables on him and jump on his head. He's the game's easiest boss, and a few hits will see this him off without much of a fuss.

LEMMY KOOPA

5 Lemmy is quite happy to try to trick you rather than attack you directly, momentarily emerging from pipes while employing two decoys. The only threats here are the fireball lazily bouncing around the screen and the time limit, although the pipes make movement slightly tricky. Jump on Lemmy's head three times and you'll defeat him.



LUDWIG VON KOOPA

6 Hey look, it's a throwback to the original *Super Mario Bros.*! Ludwig is much like the Bowser of old, standing on the right of the screen and breathing fire at you, but now he's got a twist – a spinning backflip which makes getting behind him less of a brilliant plan than it might seem. Jump on his head a few times and you'll see him off. Incidentally, Ludwig Von Koopa boasts one of the game's few non-repeated boss templates.

ROY KOOPA

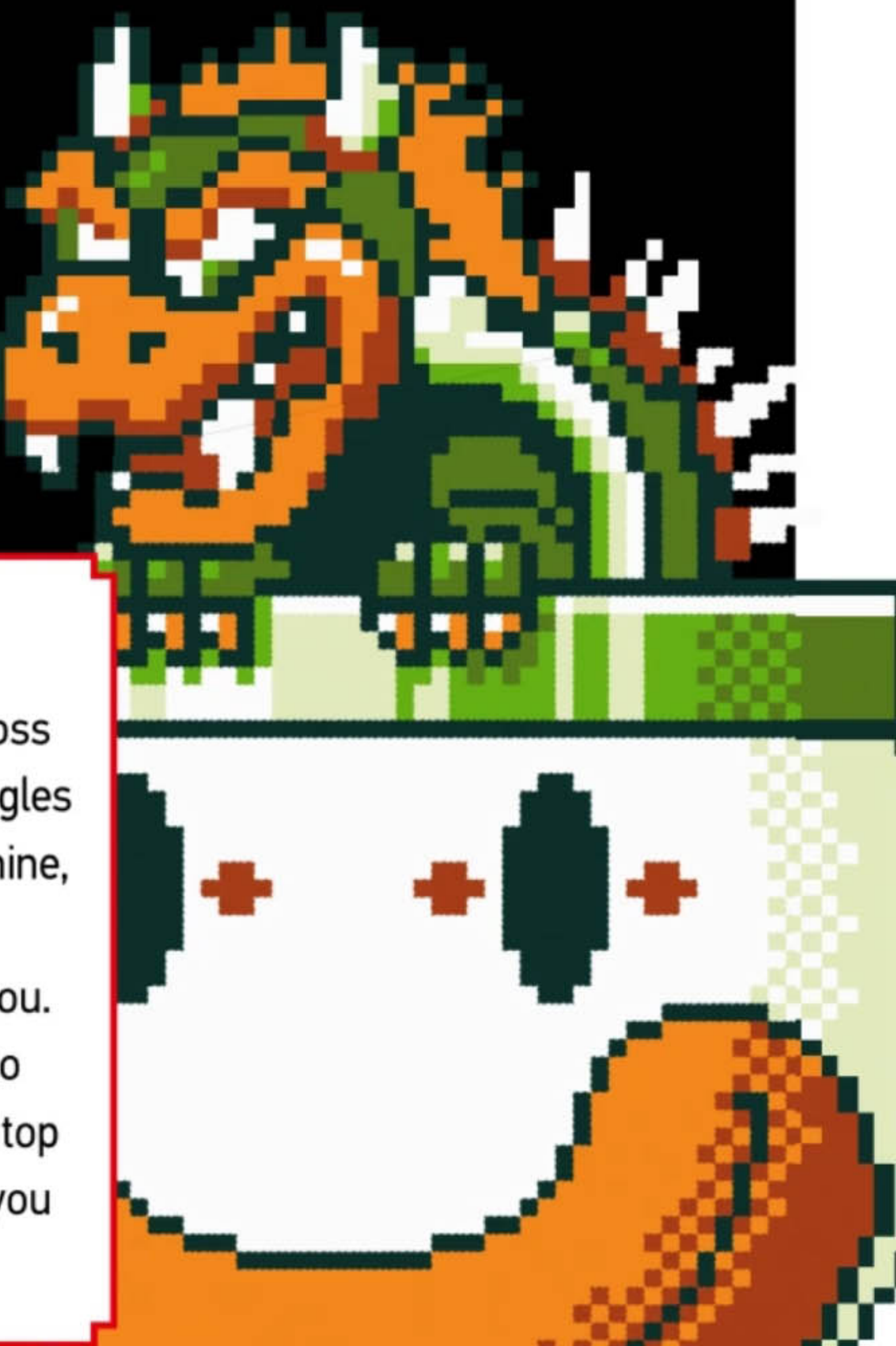
7 Roy's fight is much like the battle against Morton, but harder – the walls are closing in, making for a claustrophobic work environment. He is defeated in exactly the same way.

WENDY O. KOOPA

8 Wendy shares her brilliant plan with the hare-brained Lemmy, substituting the uneven pipes for a second bouncing fireball – so you face a greater threat, but with greater mobility. Jump on her head.

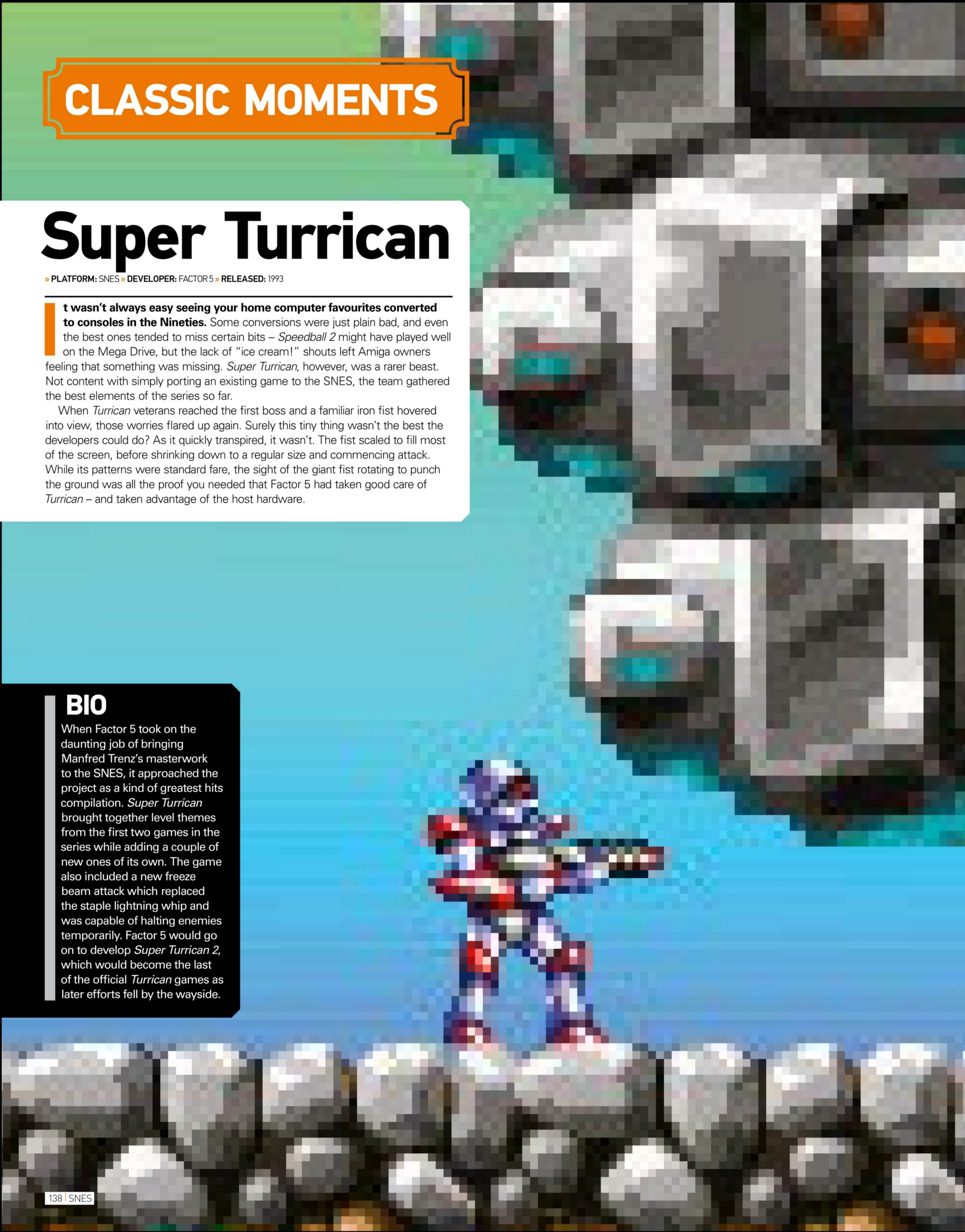
LARRY KOOPA

9 Larry has borrowed that fancy tilting platform from Iggy, and he's hooked up the lava fountain to spit up some nice deadly fireballs too. Give him a nice hot bath.



BOWSER

10 One of only two completely unavoidable boss fights in the game, Bowser has various angles of attack. He'll try to ram you with his flying machine, he'll drop fire on you from above, he'll roll giant metal balls at you and he'll lob Mechakoopas at you. The latter are important – to beat him, you need to immobilise them, then lob them upwards and on top of Bowser. After a couple of hits, Peach will give you a mushroom. Then rinse and repeat!



CLASSIC MOMENTS

Super Turrican

» PLATFORM: SNES **» DEVELOPER:** FACTOR 5 **» RELEASED:** 1993

It wasn't always easy seeing your home computer favourites converted to consoles in the Nineties. Some conversions were just plain bad, and even the best ones tended to miss certain bits – *Speedball 2* might have played well on the Mega Drive, but the lack of "ice cream!" shouts left Amiga owners feeling that something was missing. *Super Turrican*, however, was a rarer beast. Not content with simply porting an existing game to the SNES, the team gathered the best elements of the series so far.

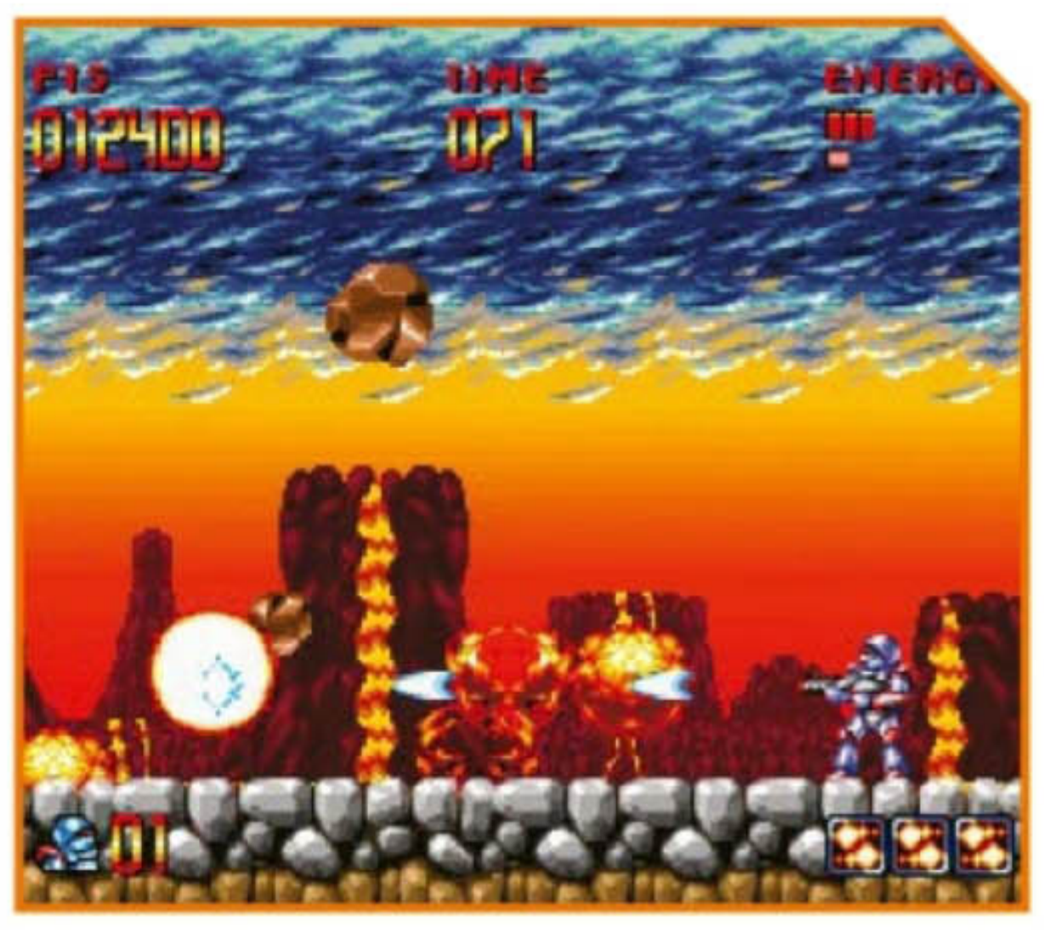
When *Turrican* veterans reached the first boss and a familiar iron fist hovered into view, those worries flared up again. Surely this tiny thing wasn't the best the developers could do? As it quickly transpired, it wasn't. The fist scaled to fill most of the screen, before shrinking down to a regular size and commencing attack. While its patterns were standard fare, the sight of the giant fist rotating to punch the ground was all the proof you needed that Factor 5 had taken good care of *Turrican* – and taken advantage of the host hardware.

BIO

When Factor 5 took on the daunting job of bringing Manfred Trenz's masterwork to the SNES, it approached the project as a kind of greatest hits compilation. *Super Turrican* brought together level themes from the first two games in the series while adding a couple of new ones of its own. The game also included a new freeze beam attack which replaced the staple lightning whip and was capable of halting enemies temporarily. Factor 5 would go on to develop *Super Turrican 2*, which would become the last of the official *Turrican* games as later efforts fell by the wayside.

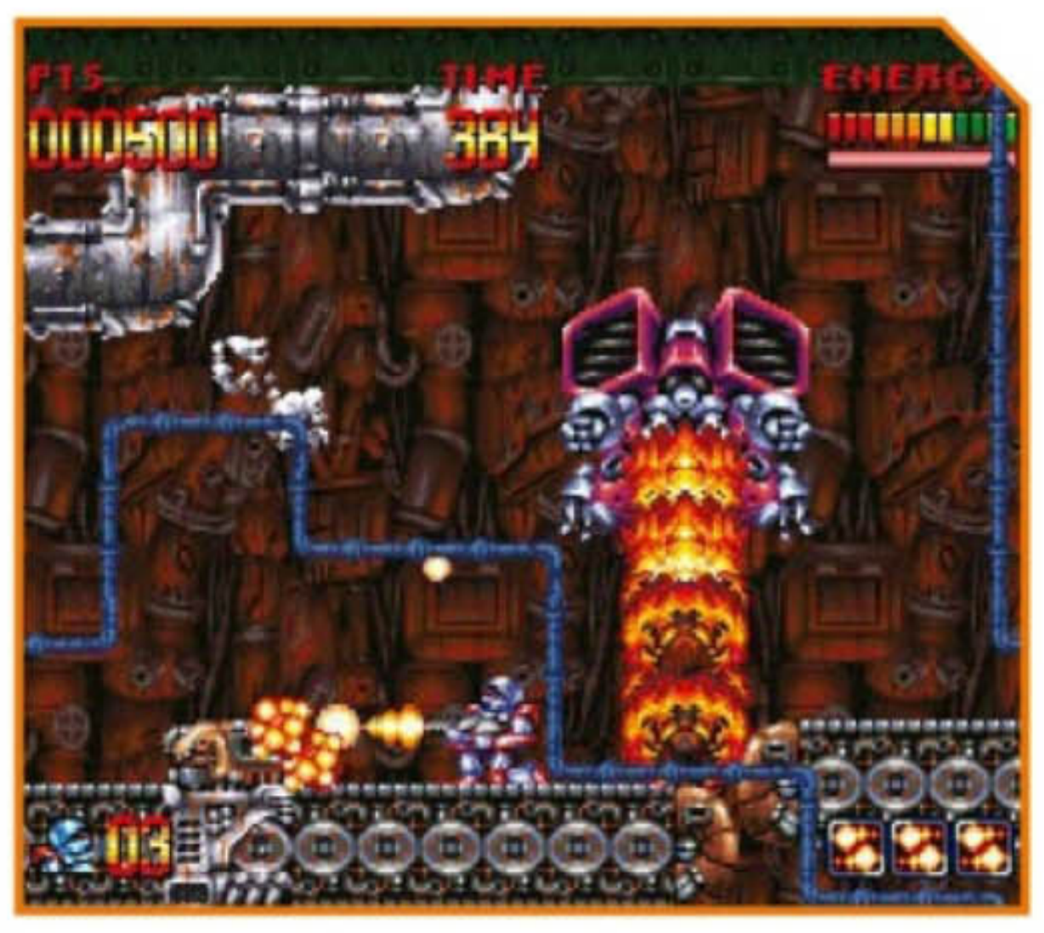
MORE CLASSIC SUPER TURRICAN MOMENTS

Rock Hard



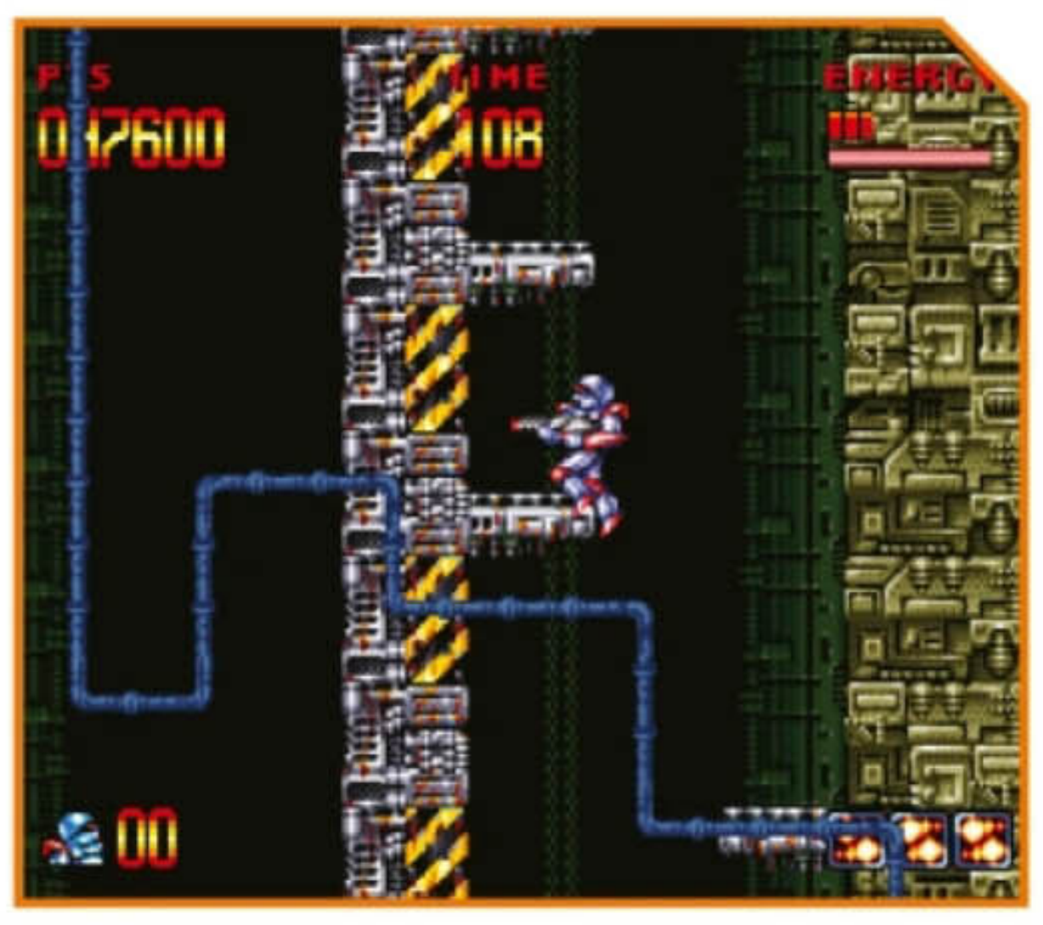
When the screen locks in place and stone rain begins to fall, it's time to demonstrate your agility. Not only does the assault follow you, but the rocks split into two as they land, widening the potential hit area. The shower might only last 20 seconds, but it's hard to get through without taking a hit – we'd advise rolling as much as you can.

Playing The Angles



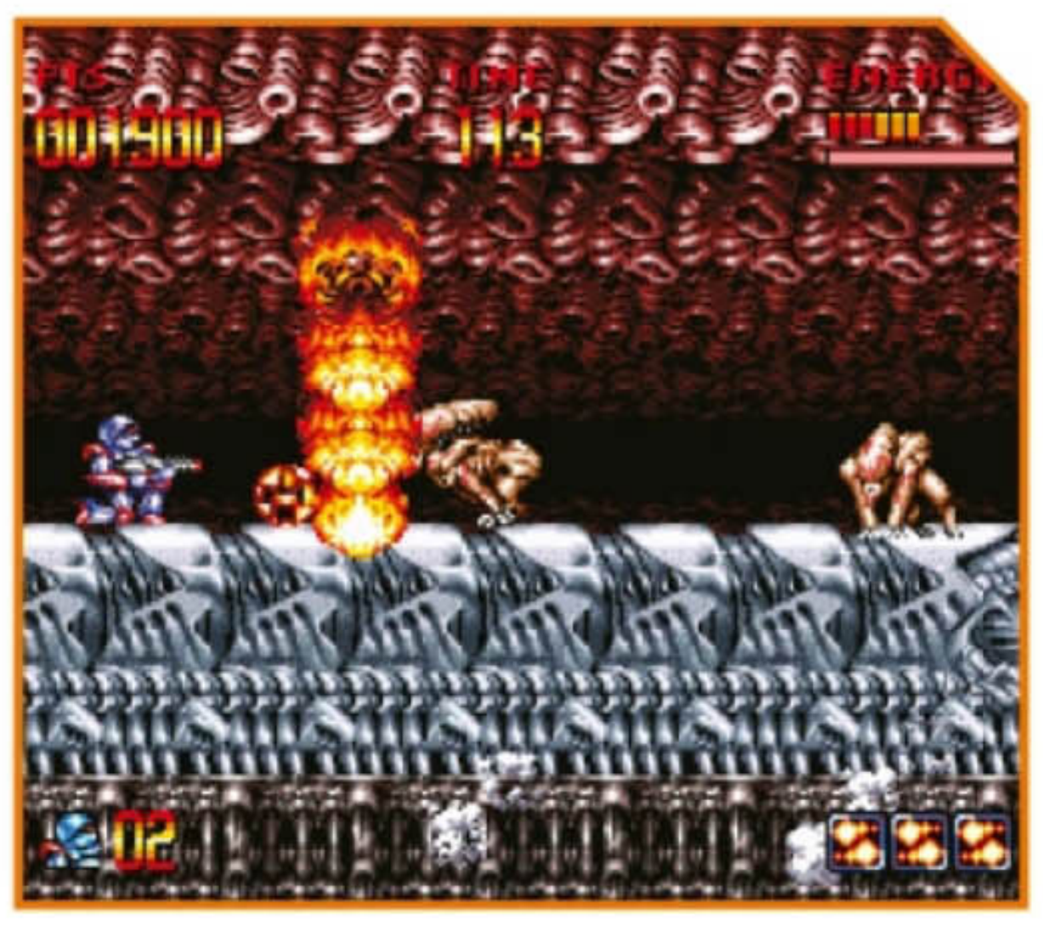
While the reflector shot isn't new, the carnage it can cause is always thrilling. With the right combination of positioning and geometry, you can hit any point on the screen, enabling you to take out dangerous enemies from positions of safety. But as satisfying as that is, it's more fun to indiscriminately fill the screen with bullets and watch things blow up.

Crush Hour



No, that's not a claustrophobic delusion – the walls really are closing in on you. It's a race against time as you hop from platform to platform, with diamonds placed tantalisingly on the central footholds to lure you from the safe routes. Eventually though, you'll be hopping up one or the other as it's impossible to escape with much time to spare.

Heart Of The Alien



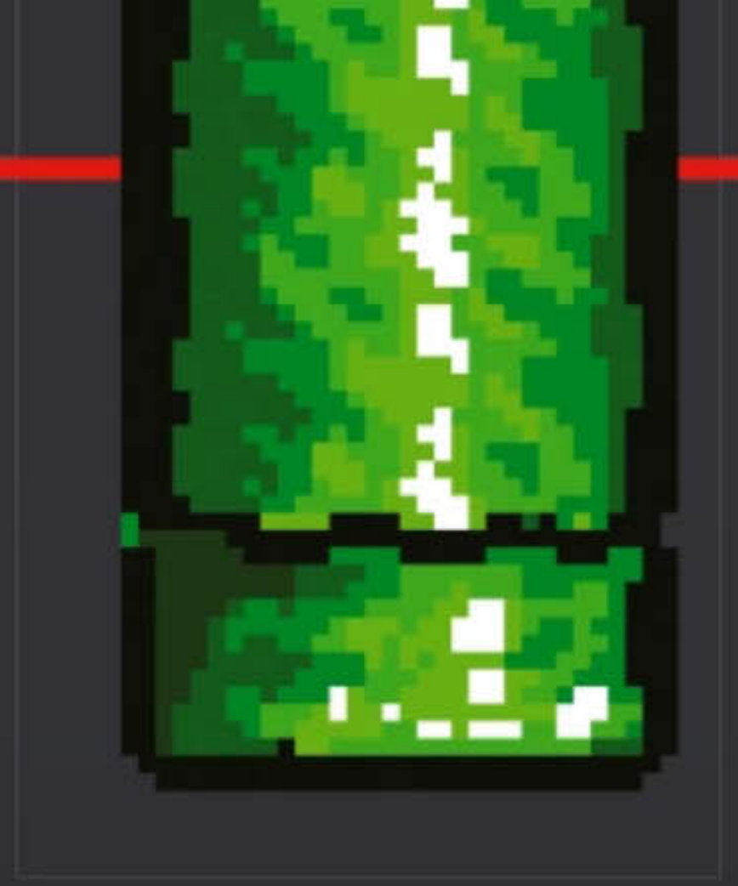
The alien setting of the final stages is clearly inspired by the work of HR Giger and is oozing with details, such as the pulsating background and salivating aliens. But it's the horror of the biomechanical train that lingers in the memory – you'll need to dodge barriers and shoot aliens, while watching out for fires and gaps between the carriages.

HONEY, I SHRUNK THE SNES

After the success of the NES Mini it was inevitable that Nintendo would produce a follow-up. Nick Thorpe guides you through the 16-bit marvel's roster of games…

RESET
EJECT
POWER
Nintendo
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
1
2

5+1 PAGES PRE-INSTALLED

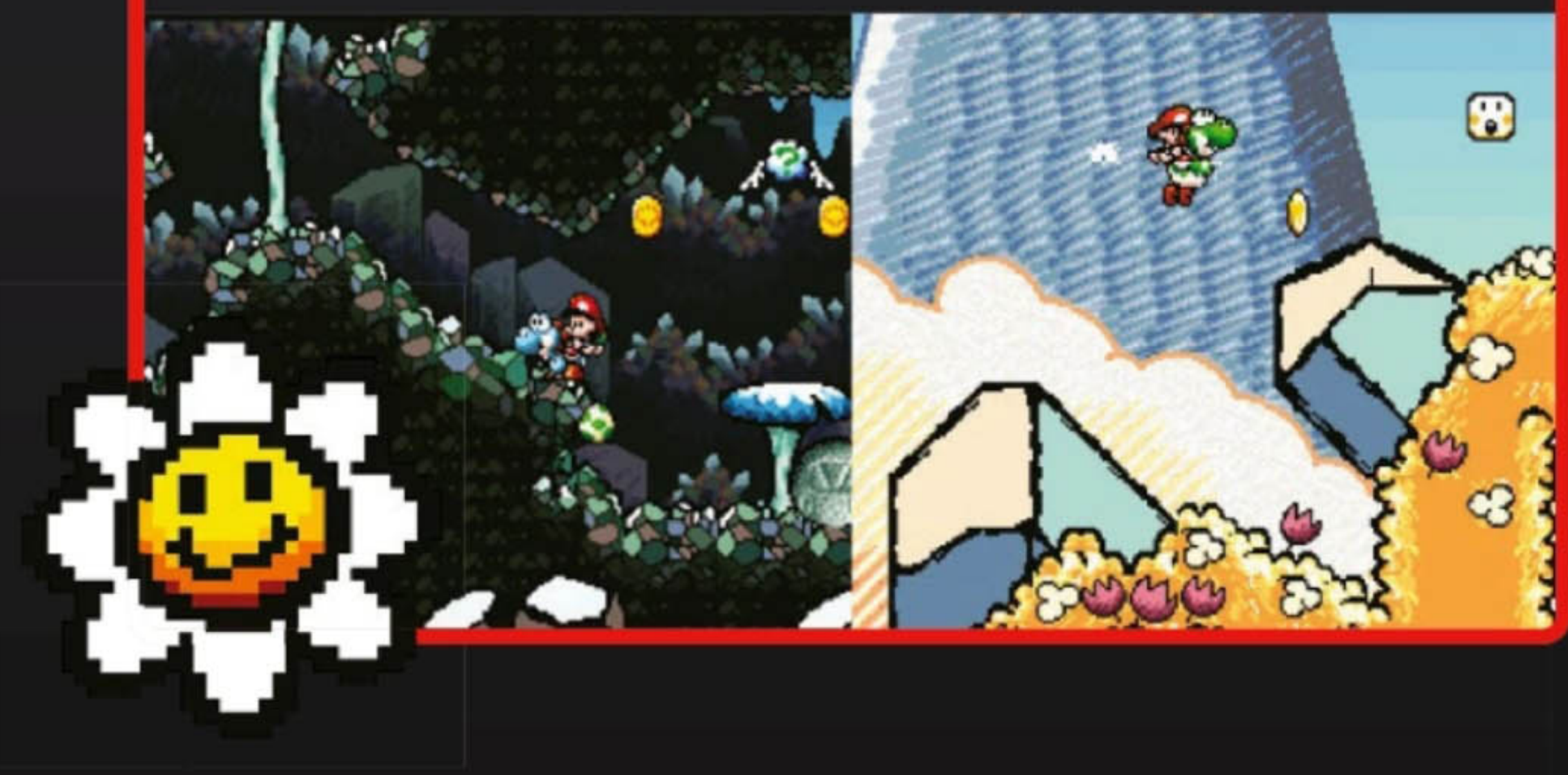


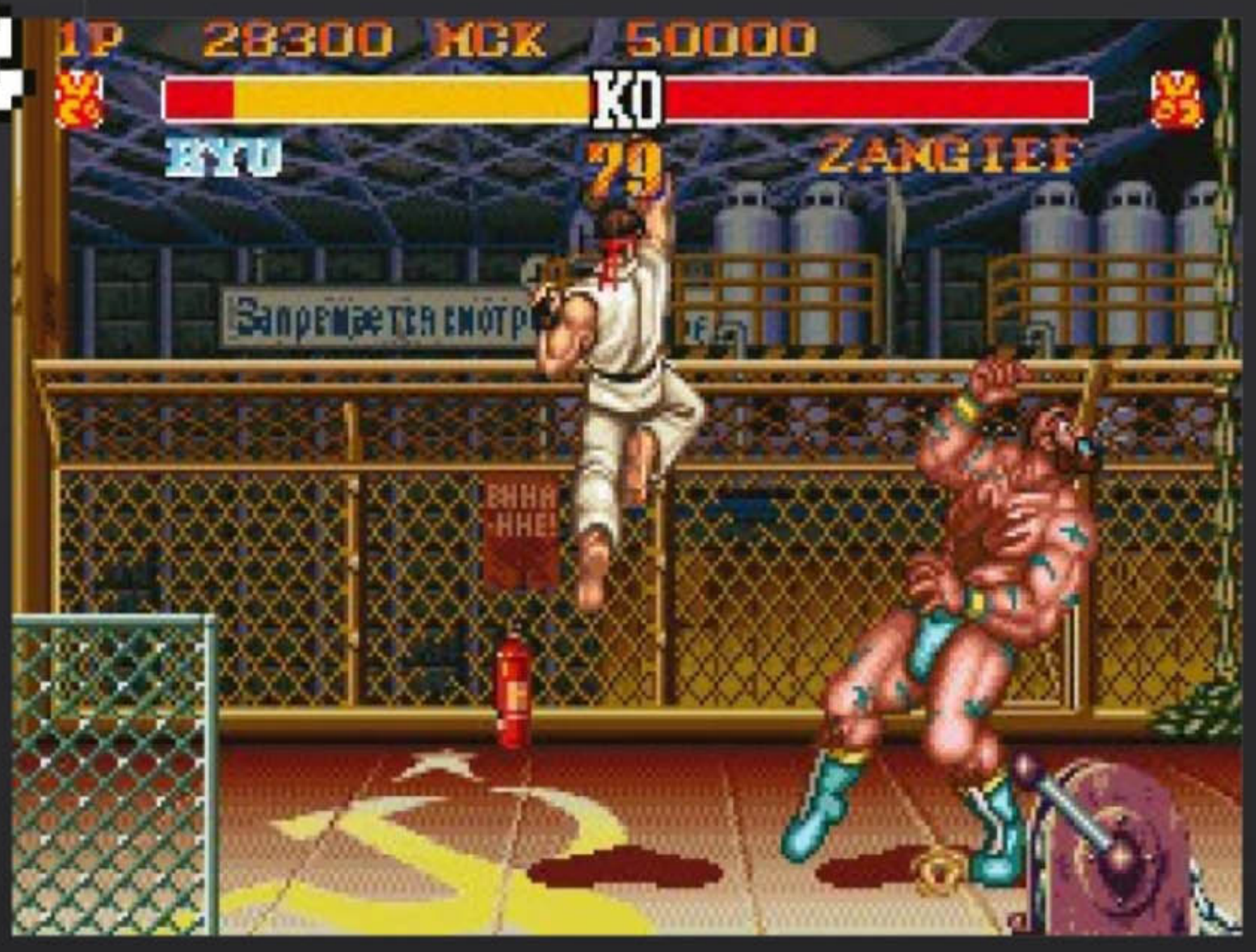
YOSHI'S ISLAND

WORLD'S BEST BABYSITTING JOB

NINTENDO, 1995

It's been said that the hand-drawn style of *Yoshi's Island* was Shigeru Miyamoto's artistic counterpoint to the prerendered gloss of *Donkey Kong Country*. It was a bold artistic choice that paid off and *Yoshi's Island* hasn't aged a day. *Yoshi's Island* is a damned fine platformer, featuring the kind of inventive level design that separates the *Mario* series from run-of-the-mill fare. There aren't many times we'll drop everything to carry around a temperamental baby, but *Yoshi's Island* is good enough to convince us that the delivering of the stork's lost cargo is a worthwhile endeavour.





STREET FIGHTER II TURBO

SPEED AND POWER

CAPCOM, 1993

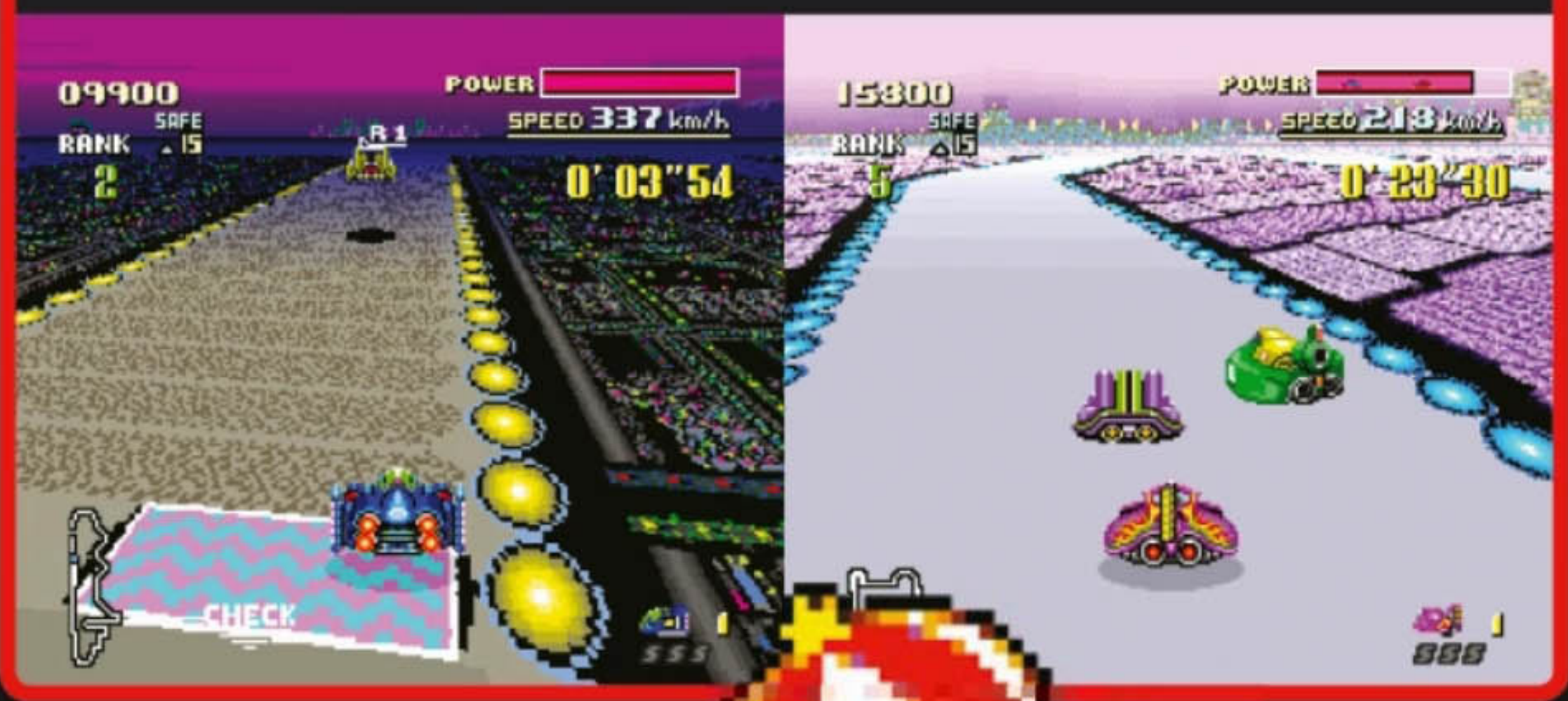
Hits didn't come much bigger than *Street Fighter II* in the early Nineties, and this fast-paced revision of Capcom's one-on-one fighter is a nostalgic favourite. As compared to the original, *Turbo* features faster gameplay, new moves for most characters and the ability to play as the four boss characters. Interestingly, the Japanese version of the console features *Super Street Fighter II* instead of this version, but let's be honest – how many of us are *really* going to miss Dee Jay? We'll trade him for a faster game any day.

F-ZERO

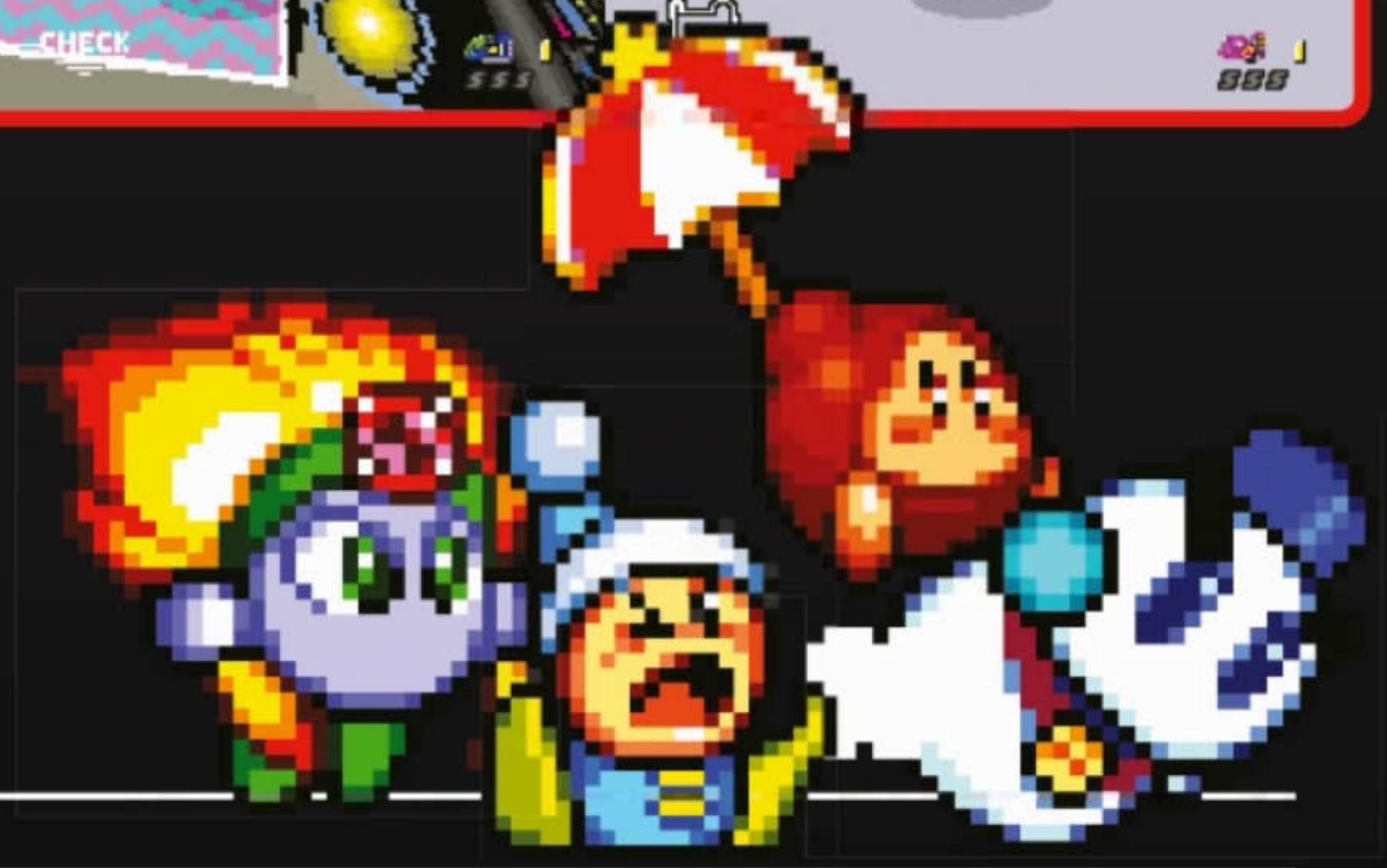
YOU GOT BOOST POWER!

NINTENDO, 1990

The Nintendo Classic Mini: SNES wouldn't be complete without the first great display of Mode 7. *F-Zero*'s use of a scaling and rotating graphic layer to create race tracks was astonishing, allowing for smooth turns and high speeds that were completely incredible back in the early Nineties. However, it doesn't just demonstrate the console's signature graphical trick – *F-Zero* remains a challenging racing game with an excellent handling model and peerless track design. Play through it, fall in love all over again, and then weep when you remember that Nintendo hasn't made a new *F-Zero* in an astonishing 13 years.



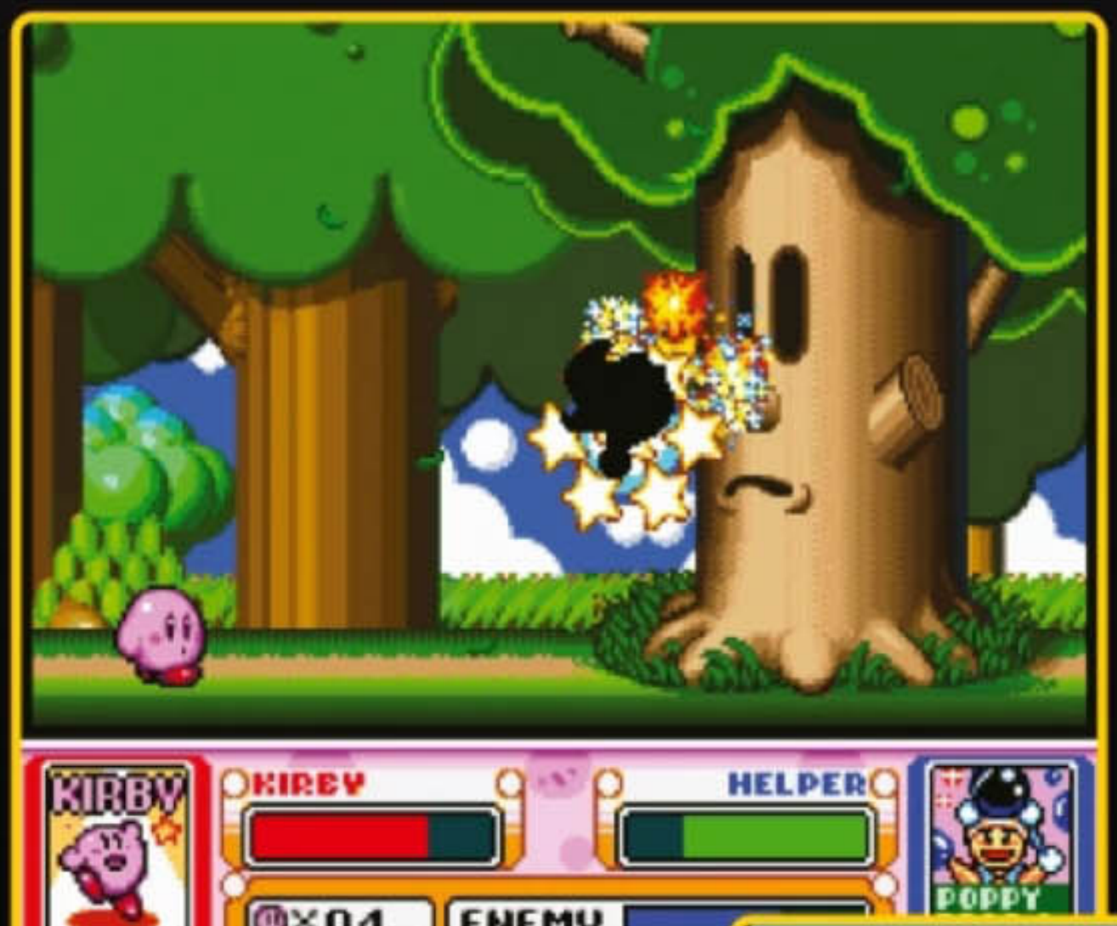
KIRBY SUPER STAR



A CONSTELLATION OF MINIGAMES

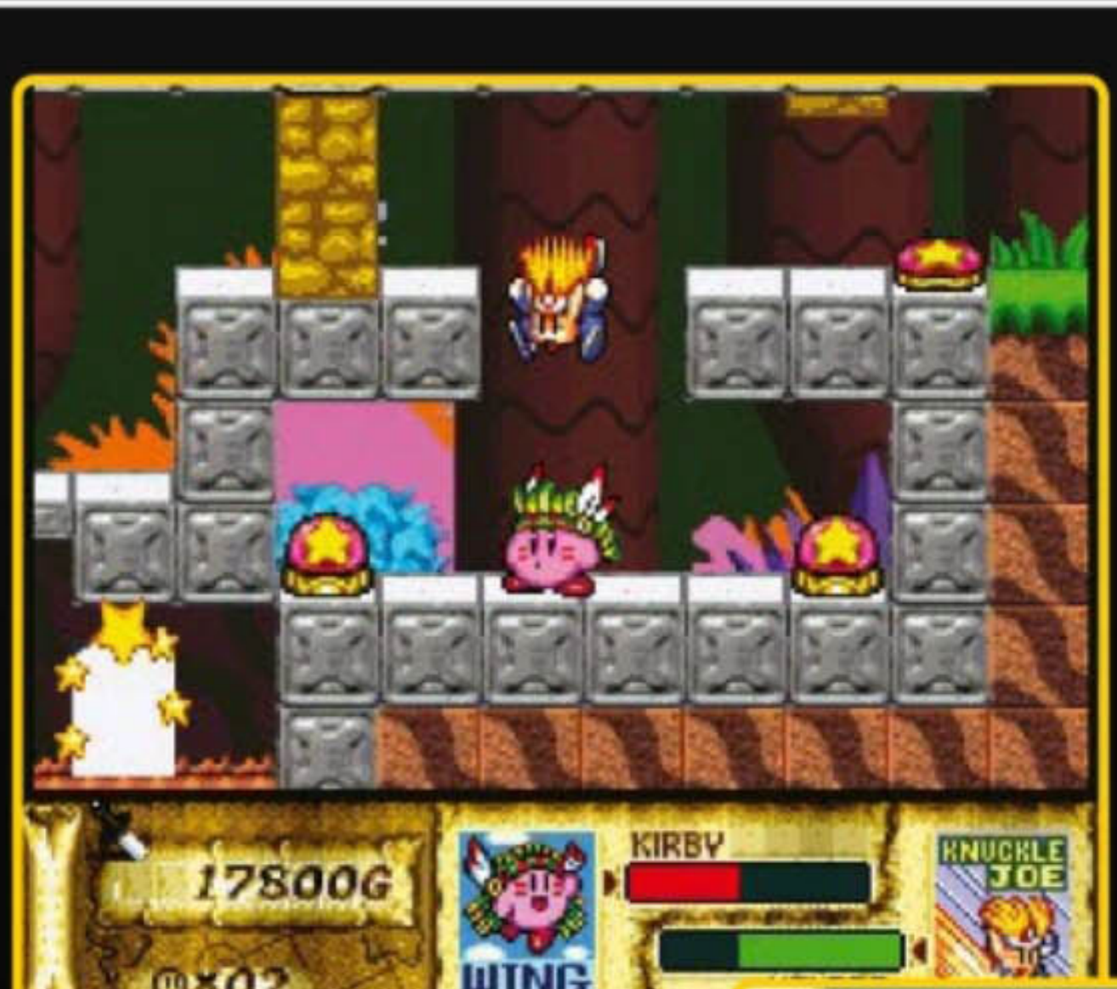
Kirby's finest hour saw the pink puffball starring in nine games on the same cartridge…

HAL LABORATORY, 1996



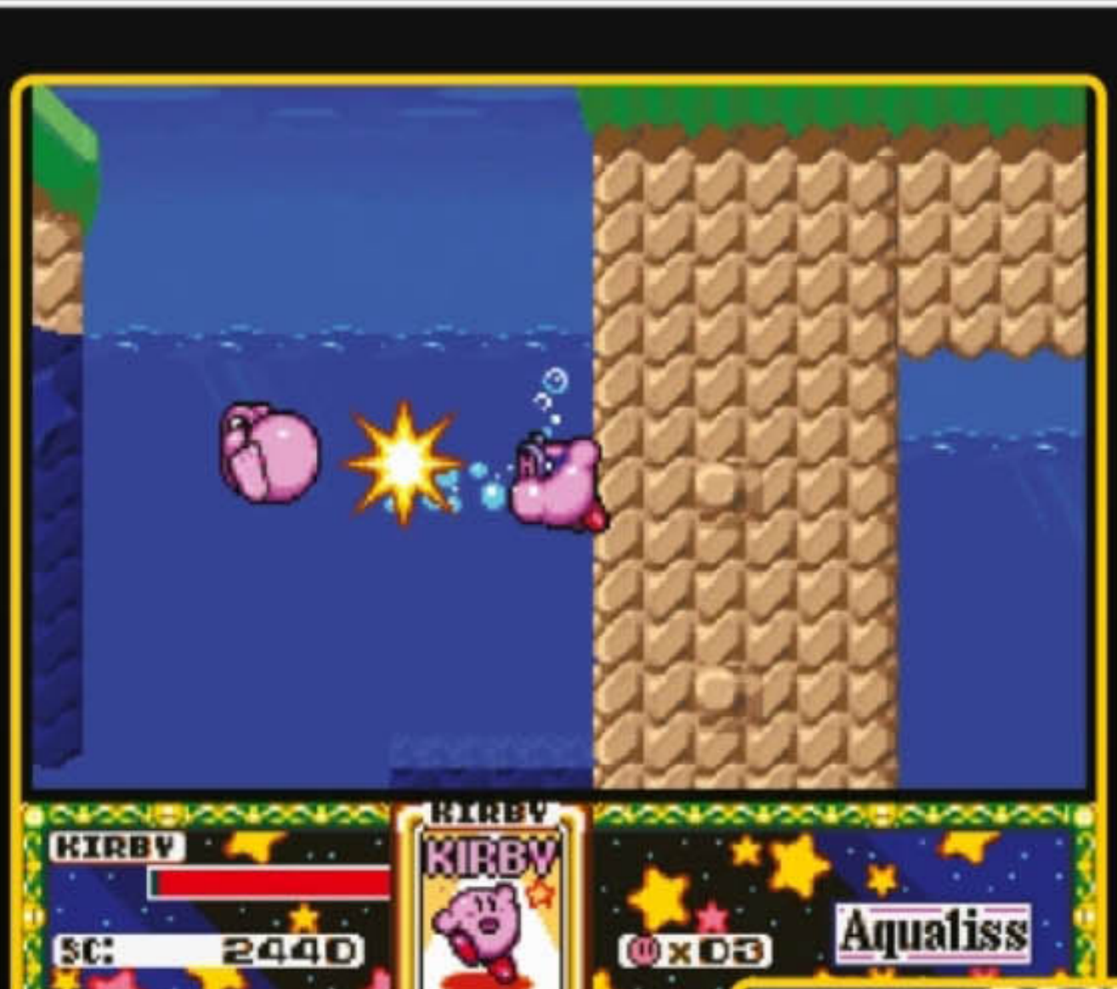
SPRING BREEZE

■ HAL decided to simplify the Game Boy's *Kirby's Dream Land* and remake it for the SNES, and Spring Breeze is the result.



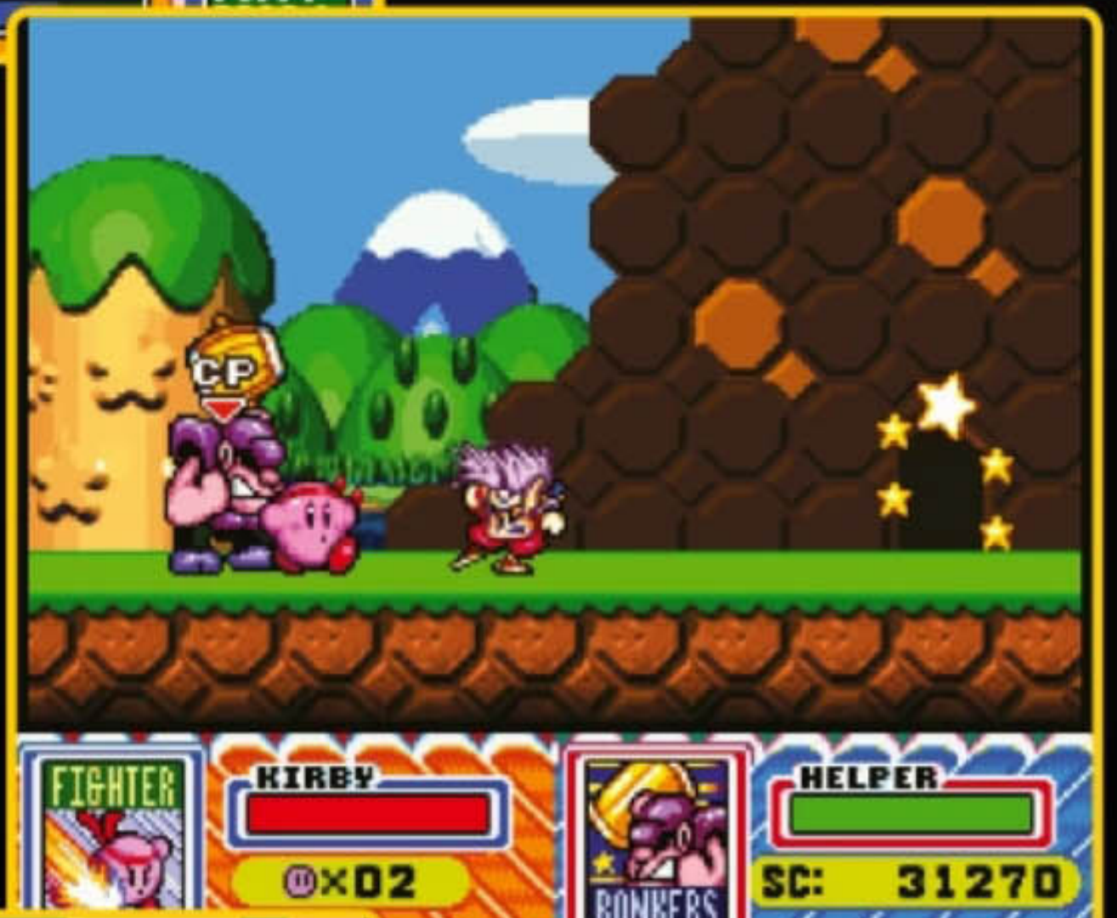
THE GREAT CAVE OFFENSIVE

■ This adventure casts Kirby as an explorer searching for hidden treasures, trying to claim the maximum score.



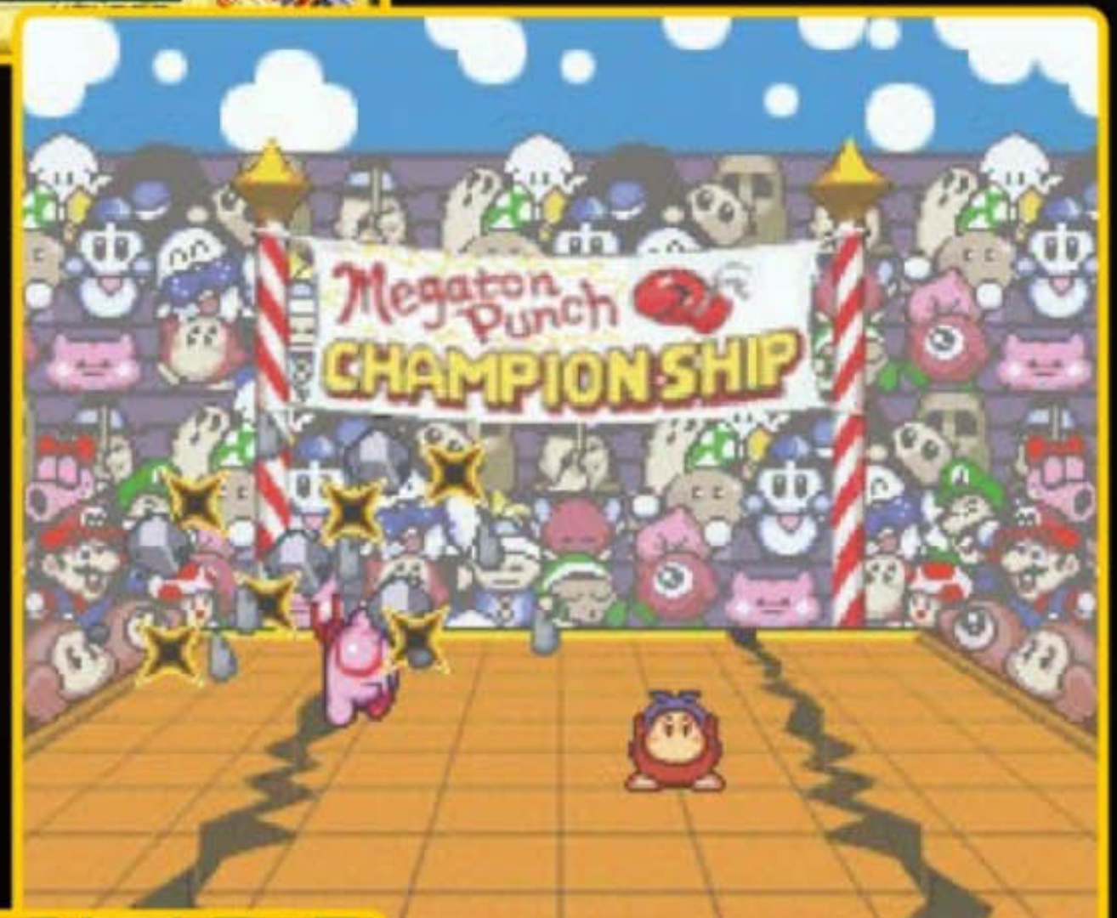
MILKY WAY WISHES

■ The largest game in the collection modifies Kirby's normal copy ability and tasks him with stopping solar warfare.



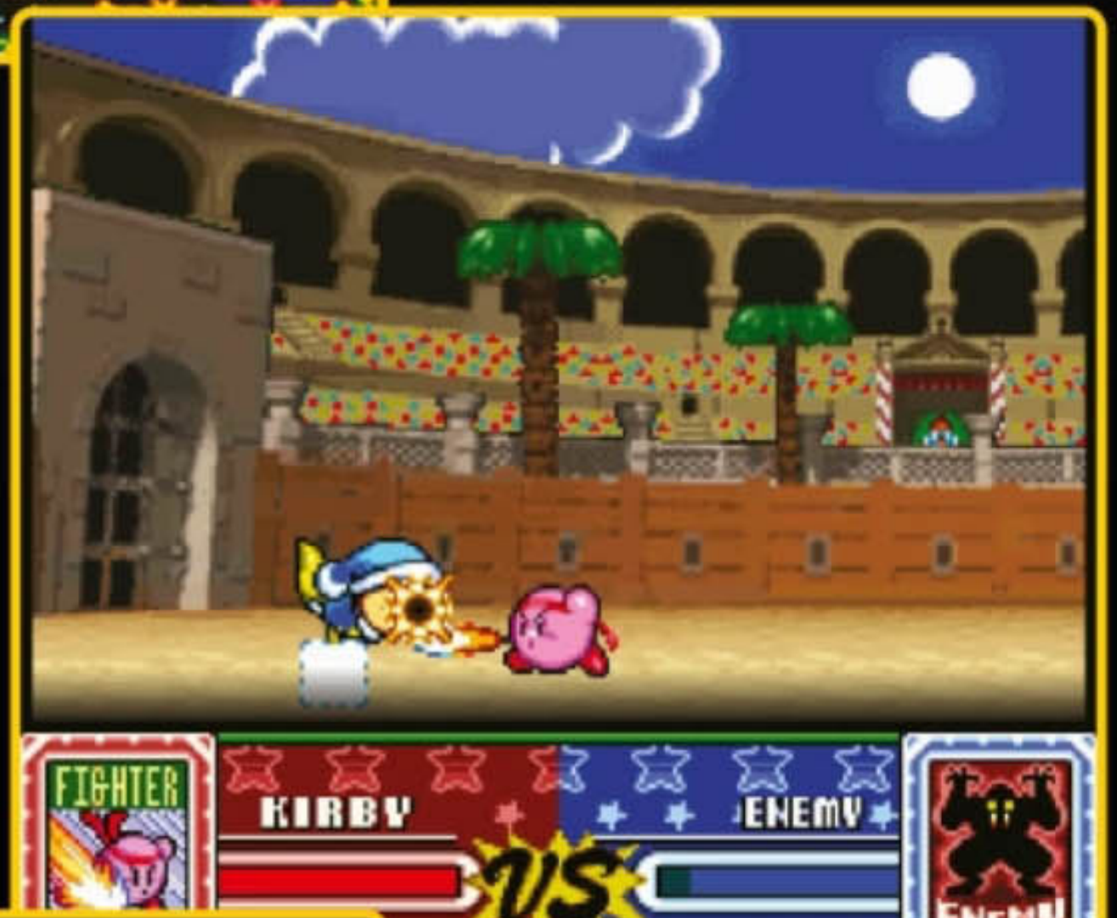
DYNA BLADE

■ The gigantic bird Dyna Blade is attacking crops – help Kirby stop this menace in a four-level platform game.



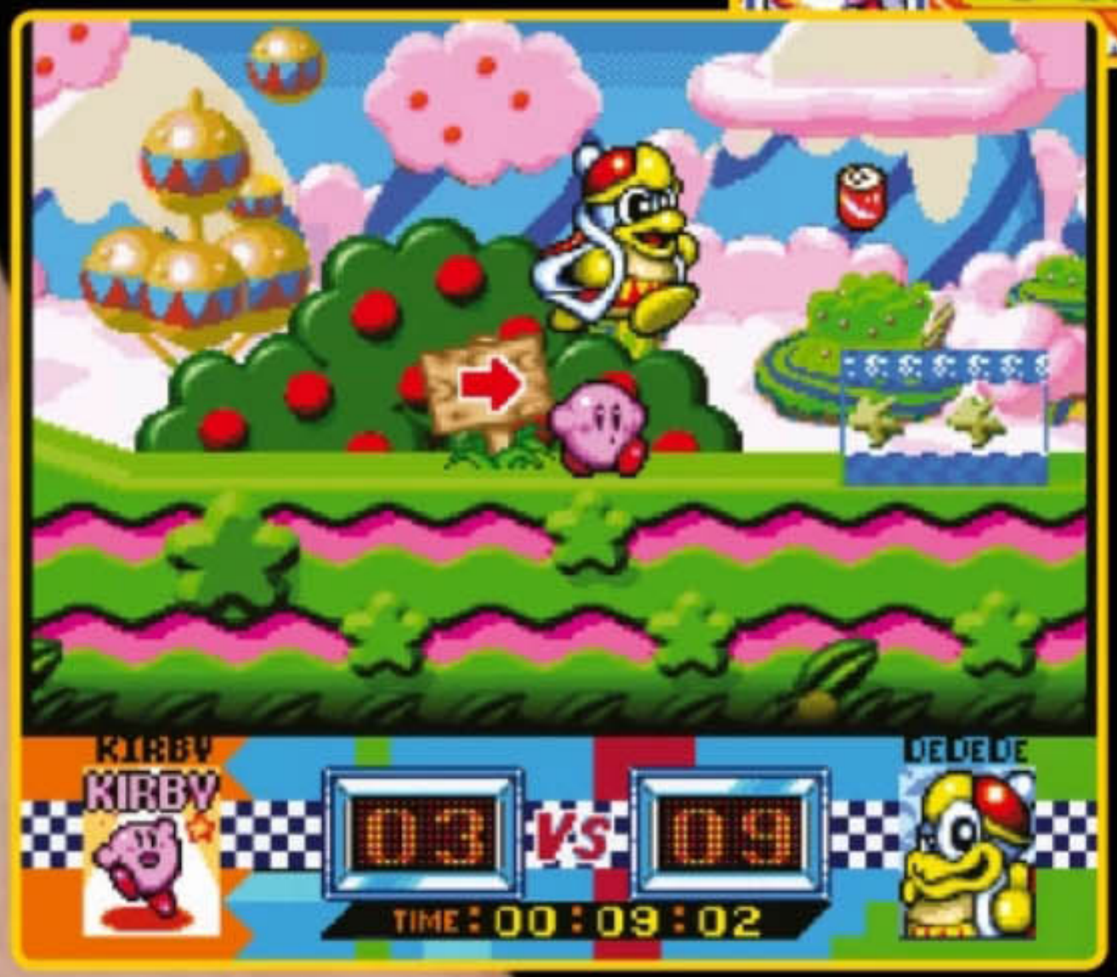
MEGATON PUNCH

■ Focus up, time your punch, and unleash a force so powerful that it cracks the very planet you're standing on.



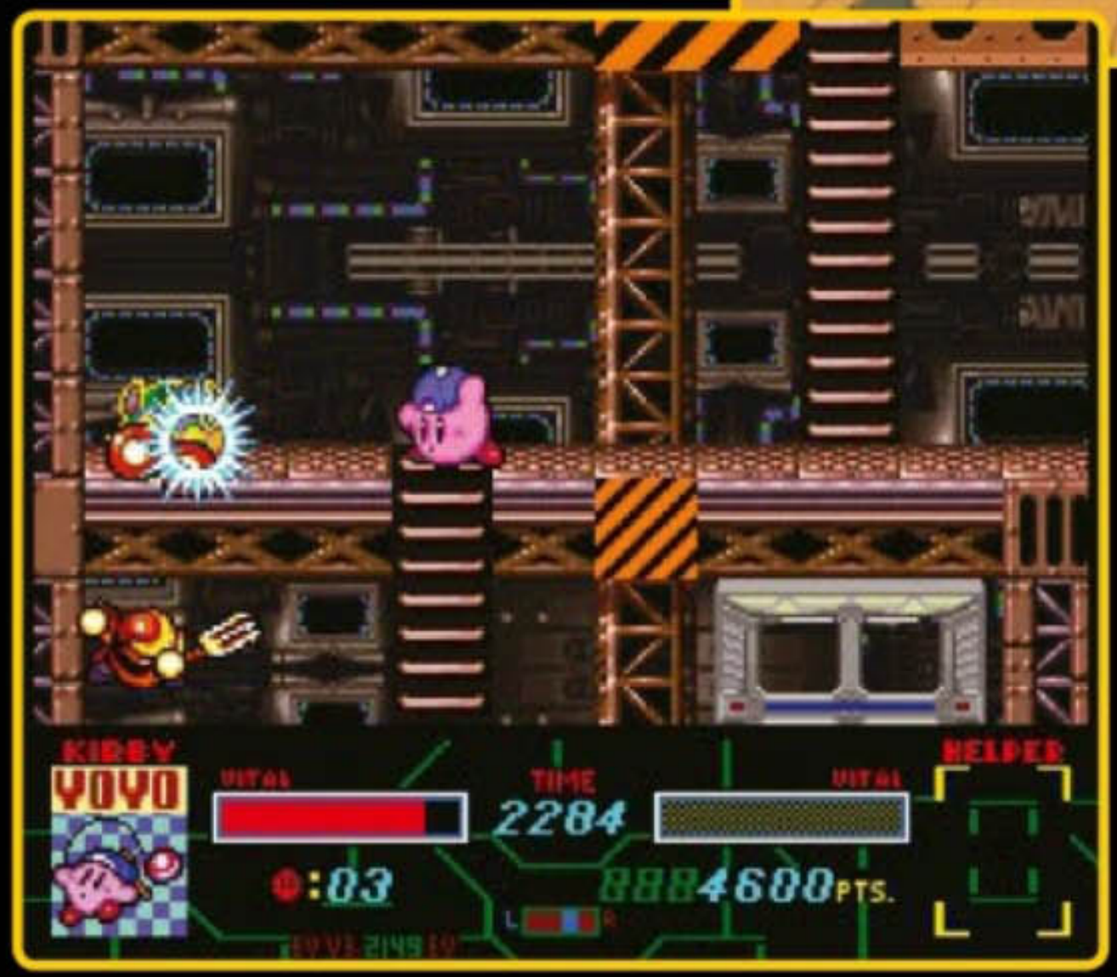
THE ARENA

■ It's a boss rush where endurance is the key to success. Pick a power and trash over 20 enemies.



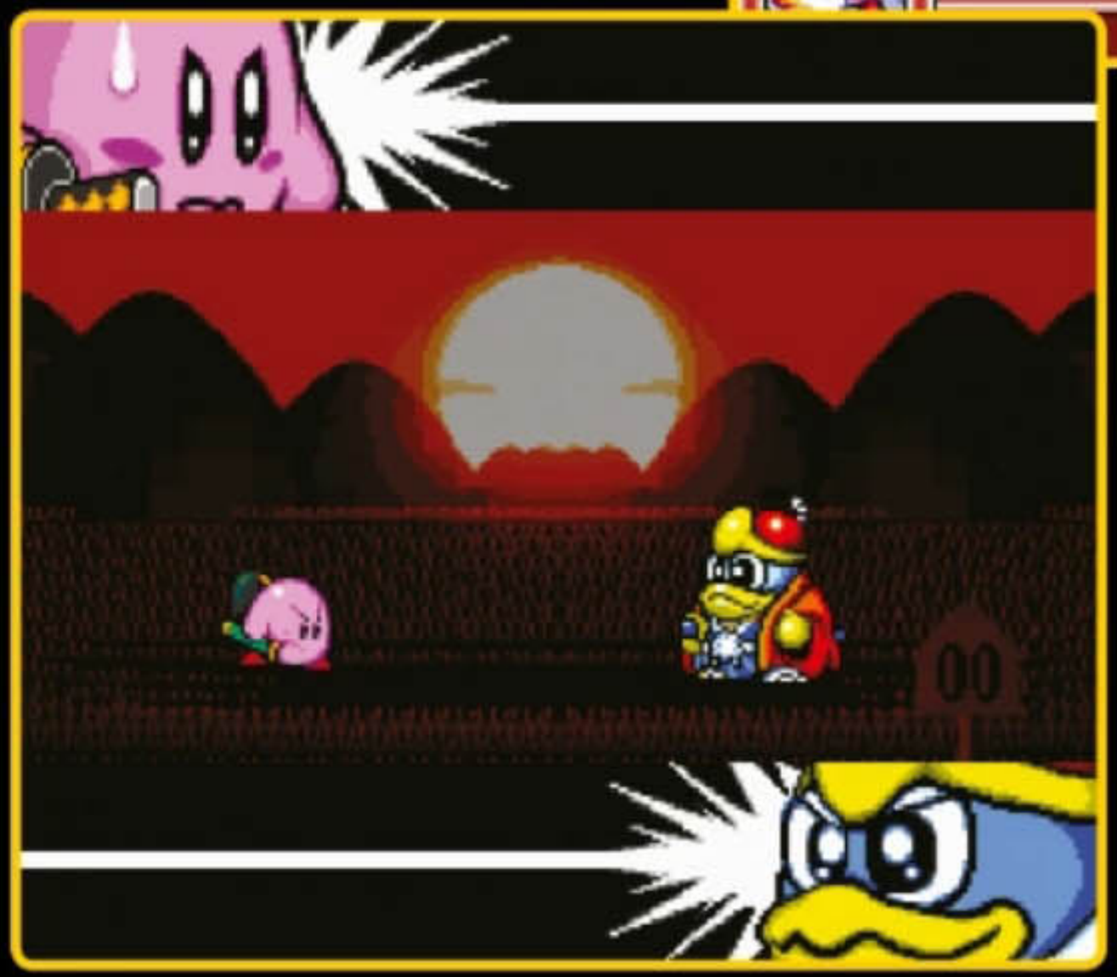
GOURMET RACE

■ Kirby and King Dedede face off in a race to eat as much food as possible, with the victor being the highest scorer.



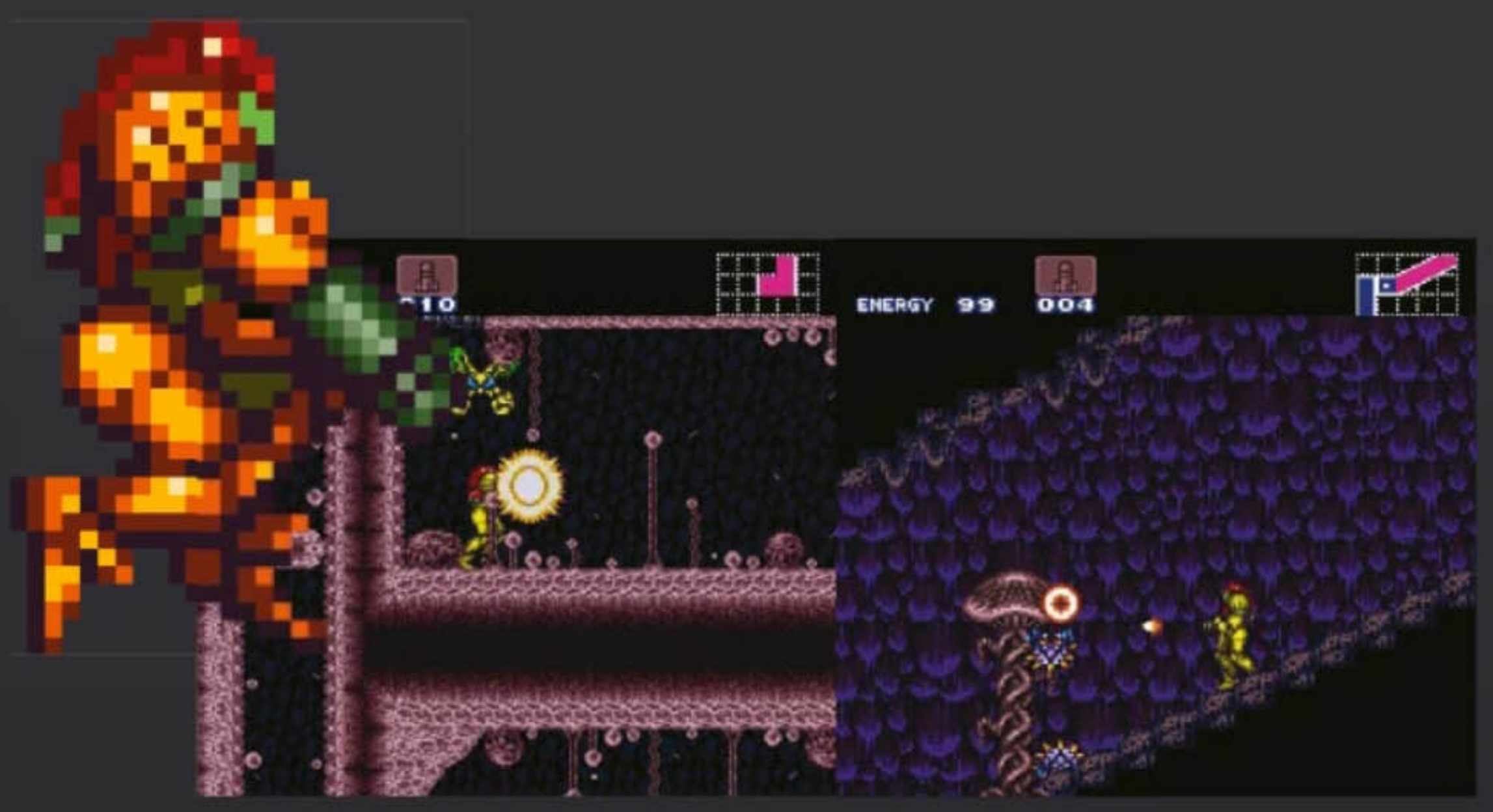
REVENGE OF META KNIGHT

■ This dramatic platform game gives Kirby the task of destroying Meta Knight's ship in order to save Dream Land.



SAMURAI KIRBY

■ This mode is a samurai duel, in which finely honed reflexes are required to best a variety of Kirby's usual foes.



SUPER METROID

A RIDLEY GOOD TIME

NINTENDO/INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS, 1994

Here's a game that just seems to get better with age. Nintendo has tried to top it with the likes of *Metroid Fusion* and *Zero Mission*, it has changed focus with the *Metroid Prime* series and even done a bizarre spin-off with *Federation Force*. However, nothing compares to the magic of this 16-bit outing, and that's why it's one of the most loved SNES games. The key is the use of a large, seemingly open map which encourages exploration. Samus is alone in the world, and that's emphasised with dark environments that contrast with Samus' bright Power Suit, as well as some very downbeat musical backing. Play it again and you'll realise why you missed it so much.

FINAL FANTASY VI

SON OF A SUBMARINER!

SQUARESOFT, 1994

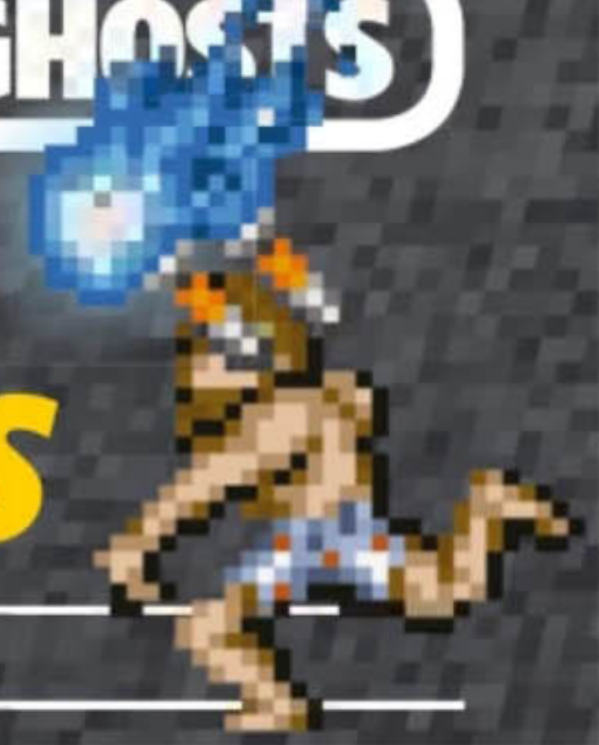
This JRPG predates the series' rise to international hit status, but it's a favourite amongst genre aficionados. It's a justifiable choice, too. Not only does *Final Fantasy VI* boast some lovely visuals by the standards of SNES RPGs, it features one of the most memorable plots in the genre thanks to the presence of the iconic villain Kefka Palazzo, a sociopath with a penchant for snappy one-liners. Due to the use of an unaltered ROM image of the American translation, this game is being referred to as *Final Fantasy III* for the SNES Mini, reviving a confusing naming convention that was dropped with the release of *Final Fantasy VII* 20 years ago.

I heard Duncan's son, Vargas, is missing as well.
I have a bad feeling about this...

Rhinotaur
TERRA 138~ 160
LOCKE 183~ 194
EDGAR 126~ 195

PLAYER 14200
TIME 3:08
PLAYER 22800
TIME 4:42

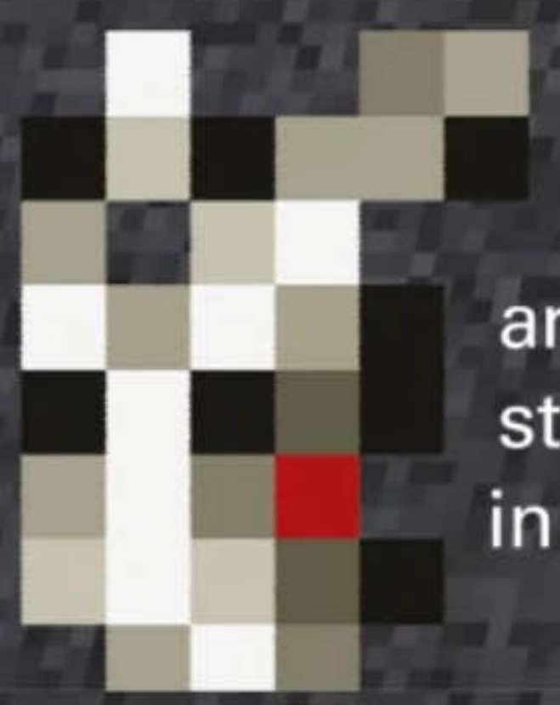
SUPER GHOULS 'N GHOSTS



I'VE DIED A MILLION TIMES

CAPCOM, 1991

If you're anything like us, you're probably sick of hearing about how *Dark Souls* is the benchmark for difficulty in videogames. The truth is that games were never afraid to give you a good kicking, and *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts* is ample proof of that. Capcom's classic platform game is actually slightly easier than its arcade predecessors, though by the same token ricin is slightly less toxic than VX – in all cases, there's an extremely high chance of death. The same horror-themed beasts are there to be slain, and you'll still have to beat the game twice in order to actually see the ending.



EARTHBOUND

10 ESSENTIAL EARTHBOUND FACTS

APE / HAL LABORATORY, 1994

***Earthbound* is one of those games that you're much more likely to have heard about than actually played, due to its prohibitively high price and lack of a PAL release.** That's a shame, because it's a cult classic that mixes an innovative mechanical take on the Japanese RPG with offbeat characters and settings. Here's what you need to know.

MAD VALUE

■ The original American SNES release of *Earthbound* sells for a going rate of over £100 unboxed, so this is great value.

MAD MONEY

■ Despite a $2 million marketing campaign, the original release sold poorly due to simple visuals and a $69.95 price tag.

UNCANNY VALLEY

■ Forget swords and sorcery – *Earthbound* is set in an odd caricature of modern America known as Eagleland.

KILLER COFFEE

■ Your enemies include abstract art, sentient vomit, hippies, and even scalding hot cups of coffee.

SECOND WIND

■ Your characters' health totals 'roll' down to zero when attacked, giving you a chance to save them from death.

NIGHTMARE FUEL

■ The game is known for having one of the most disturbing boss battles ever to appear on a Nintendo platform.

IT IS YOUR NESSTINY

■ Protagonist Ness starts his quest after learning from an alien insect that he's destined to save the world.

PURELY COINCIDENTAL

■ *Earthbound* crams in many pop culture references, including The Beatles and Monty Python.

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

■ At one point in the game, you actually venture through a living dungeon that used to be a man.

ARGH, MY EYES!

■ Some of the game's flashing battle effects were toned down in the Virtual Console release, and may be here, too.

• The Starman Junior tried PSI Fire β!

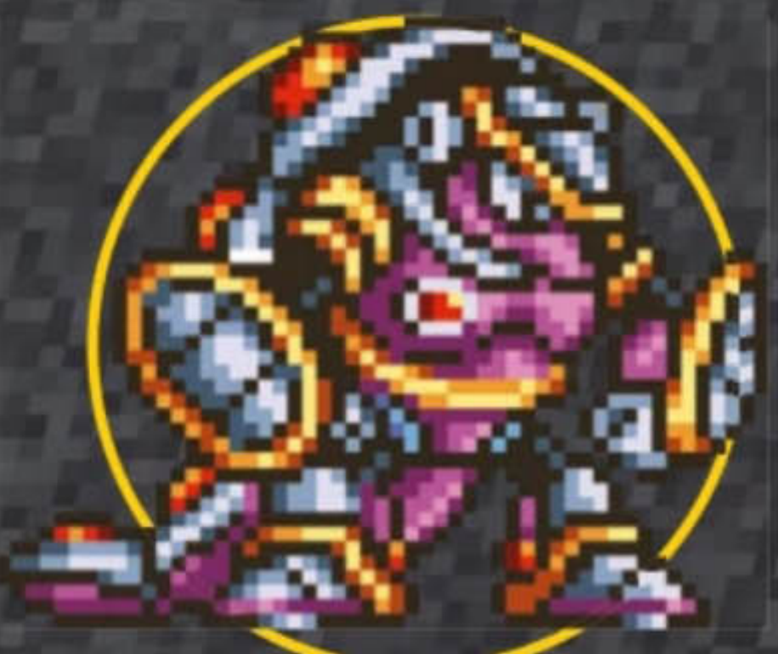
Ness
HP 21
PP 12

MEGA MAN X

MASTER BLASTERS

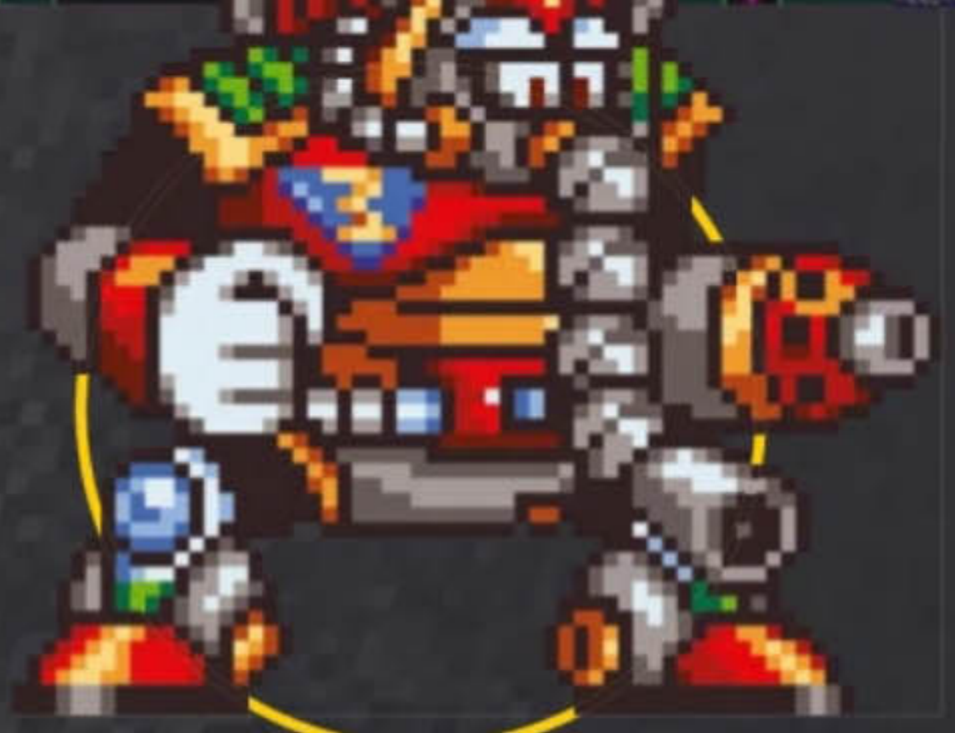
CAPCOM, 1991

The *Mega Man X* series signalled a break with the traditions of the past, dropping the old series for a new look, brand-new characters like Zero, and the ability to wall jump. It didn't drop the non-linear structure though, and those Robot Masters are as fearsome as ever. Here are the ones you'll take on in this game:



ARMORED ARMADILLO

■ This miner takes orders from any commander, and follows Sigma into battle. As you might expect, his attack involves curling into a ball and rolling.

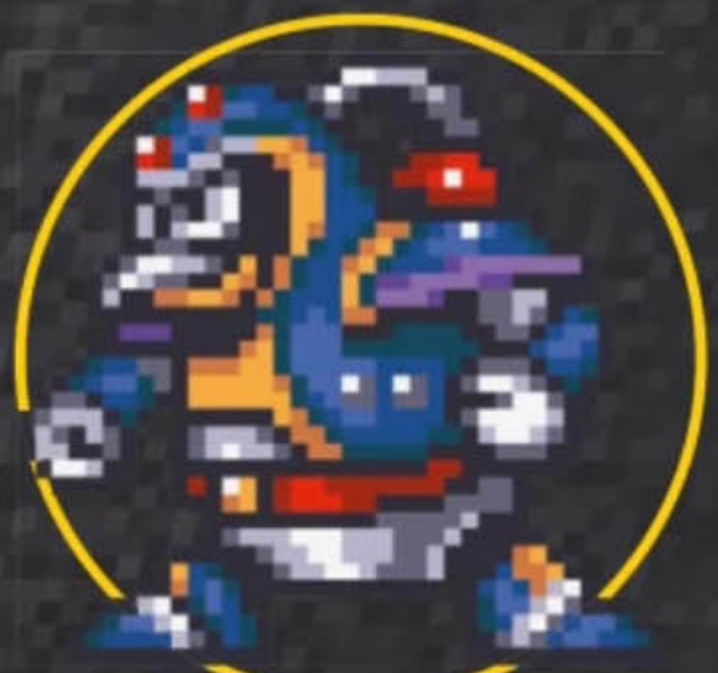


FLAME MAMMOTH

■ This Reploid sides with Sigma purely to increase his power. He spits oil and can cause paralysing tremors.

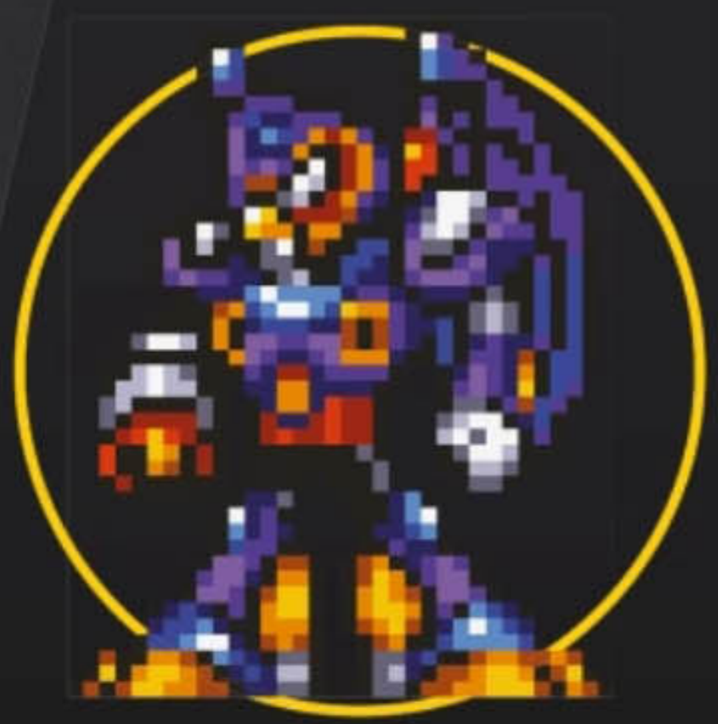
CHILL PENGUIN

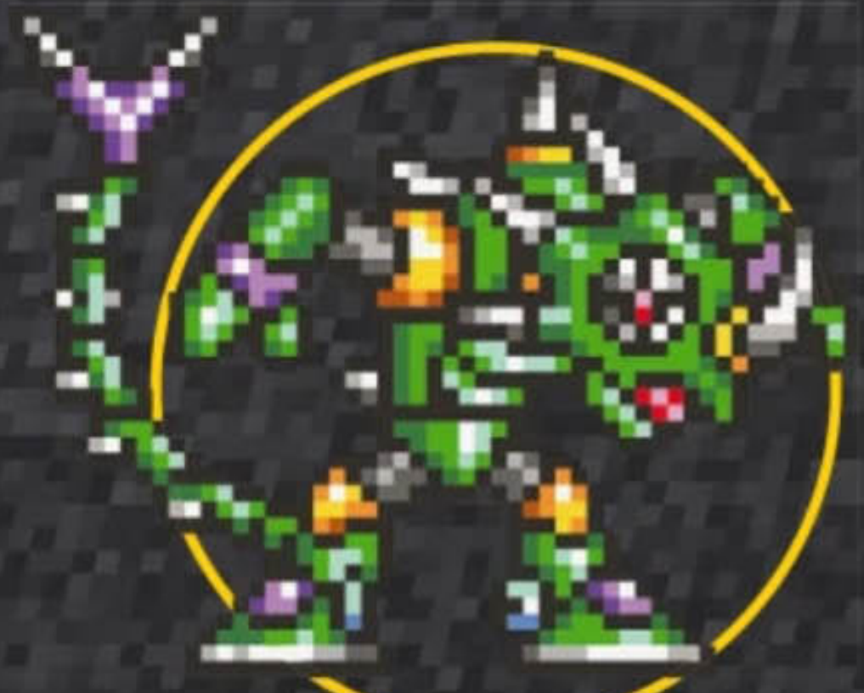
■ This slippery customer was bored in the South Pole and joined the Reploid rebellion. He's fond of sliding around, shooting ice balls and creating ice sculptures.



STORM EAGLE

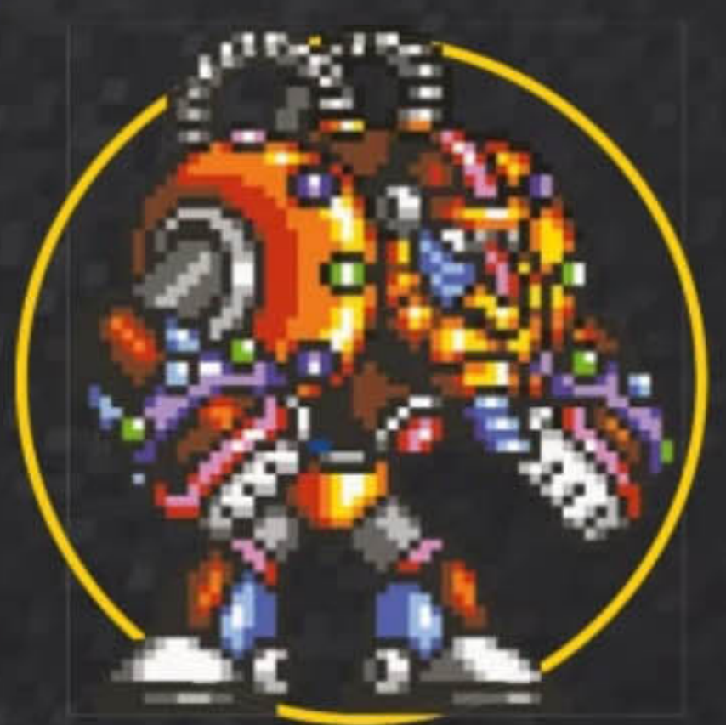
■ This brave Reploid tried to stop Sigma's rebellion, but was defeated and forced into compliance. Watch out for his lightning quick diving attacks.





STING CHAMELEON

■ This master of disguise will camouflage himself in order to sneak up to our hero and hit him. Use the Boomerang Cutter to take him down.

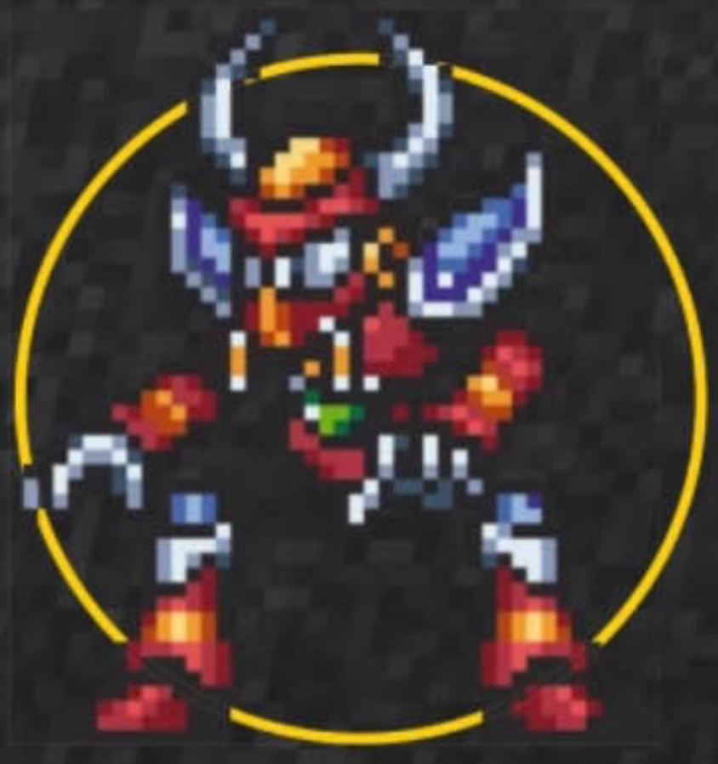


SPARK MANDRILL

■ This electricity-loving fiend is none too bright, and a direct subordinate of baddie Sigma. Grab the Shotgun Ice from Chill Penguin to make a monkey out of him.

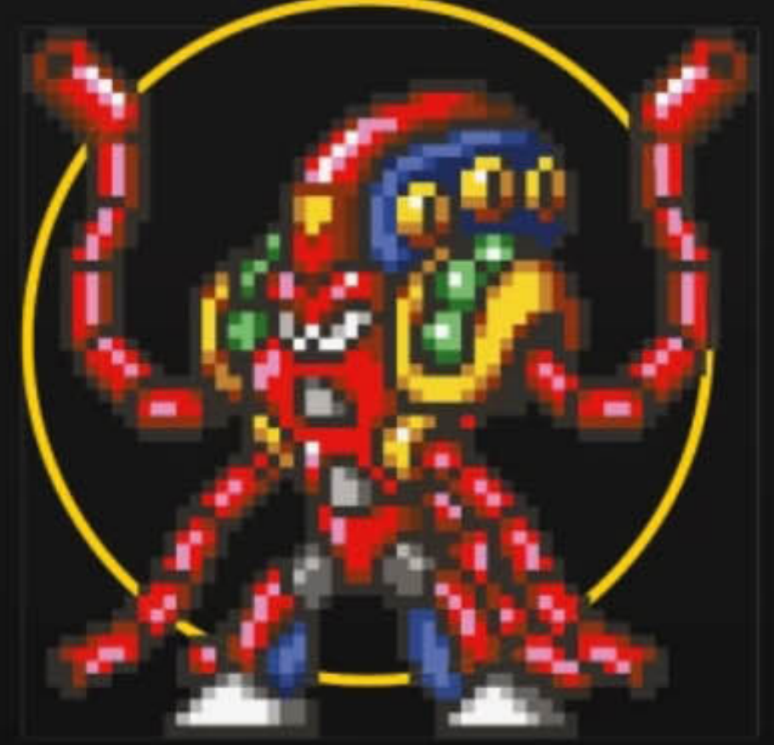
BOOMER KUWANGER

■ This rational boomerang master went maverick because it seemed logical. He also sounds like someone Bart Simpson would call at Moe's Tavern.



LAUNCH OCTOPUS

■ This genius joins Sigma to employ his amazing military strategies. He fires homing torpedoes, and can drag our hero into an energy-draining whirlpool.



SECRET OF MANA

THE CO-OP QUEST

SQUARESOFT, 1993

What sets *Secret Of Mana* apart from the other RPGs the Nintendo Classic Mini: SNES? One thing: multiplayer. It plays more like *Zelda* than the other RPGs on the package, with real-time combat that occasionally pauses rather than a menu-driven turn-based system. Don't ignore this game, even if you're not normally a fan of Squaresoft – it's a beautiful and very different kind of game from the studio.

ELDER:You idiots! Weren't you told not to go there?

CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WARS

THE TWO MAN ARMY

KONAMI, 1992

One of the SNES's weaknesses was a slow CPU, but you'd never know it to look at this run-and-gun. From beginning to end, the game is filled with crazy explosions, huge bosses and enough firepower to keep a dictator amused. Moving to 16-bit hardware let Konami push the boundaries, with elaborate level designs and brand-new elements, like tanks. You can even bring a friend along to help with the carnage.

NO INTRODUCTION NECESSARY

These mega hits sold over 46 million copies combined, so we'd imagine you're pretty familiar with them…

SUPER MARIO WORLD

NINTENDO, 1990

■ According to our readers, Mario's first 16-bit adventure is the best game ever made. Beyond the secret-filled map and introduction of Yoshi as a companion, this game is best known for having sublime level design that makes finding all 96 level exits an enjoyable task.

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY

RARE, 1994

■ Prerendered 3D graphics might not have the same impact they did in the Nineties, but good game design is timeless. Luckily, *Donkey Kong Country* possesses this in spades, and as an added bonus it supports the second controller with a co-op mode.

SUPER MARIO KART

NINTENDO, 1992

■ You know the drill – select a *Mario*-themed track to race on, slide around corners, swear as you're taken out by a red shell just before the finish line. This Mode 7 racing game is a split-screen classic which justifies the inclusion of a second controller all by itself.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

NINTENDO, 1986

■ The action-RPG classic returns in all its glory, with Link venturing between the light and dark worlds to save Zelda. The real-time combat ensures that it still offers something a little different to the likes of *Earthbound*, *Final Fantasy VI* and *Super Mario RPG*.

STAR FOX

NINTENDO/ARGONAUT, 1993

■ When Nintendo and Argonaut got together to make a 3D arcade shooter, the results were magical – in no small part thanks to the power of the SuperFX chip. The sequel is the more exciting game here, but don't sleep on the original as it's still a lot of fun.

SUPER PUNCH-OUT!!

THE NEW CONTENDERS

NINTENDO, 1994

Super Punch-Out!! is an excellent entry in the series that closely mimics its arcade forebears rather than its NES predecessor. With enormous sprites and a driving soundtrack, this boxing game shows off the SNES at its finest. Here are the fighters you'll need to take down in your quest to win the World Video Boxing Association heavyweight championship…

GABBY JAY This 56-year-old fighter wants to add a second win to his 1-99 record. He won't get it from us – he's softer than marshmallow.

BEAR HUGGER You'd better learn how to dodge, because this Canadian lumberjack is powerful. Counterpunching is crucial.

PISTON HURRICANE Like his Japanese cousin Piston Honda, he's powerful but fragile. Watch out for his patented 'Piston Rush' combo.

BALD BULL The iconic Turkish fighter is back for another fight, and his 'Bull Rush' attack is as deadly as ever – a one-hit KO!

BOB CHARLIE Your first Major Circuit opponent is a reggae fanatic from Jamaica. His 'Shuck And Jive' uppercut is a killer.

DRAGON CHAN Delivering highly illegal and incredibly deadly jumping kicks is the favoured tactic of this Hong Kong native.

MASKED MUSCLE Spitting in your eyes and headbutting you? Dirty wrestling tactics are this Mexican fighter's bread and butter.

MR SANDMAN Even if the 'Midnight Sleeper' doesn't get you, this formidable fighter can put you to sleep in a flash.

ARAN RYAN Dublin's favourite fighter is a hot-tempered gent who is prone to holding, as well as leaving the ring.

HEIKE KAGERO This kabuki actor doesn't look like he's 19 years old. He doesn't look like he could floor you either, but he can.

MAD CLOWN If you didn't suffer from coulrophobia before, a fight with this former opera singer will give it to you.

SUPER MACHO MAN This silver-haired Adonis isn't as tough as he was on the NES, but will still knock you out for fun.

NARCIS PRINCE An incredibly vain fighter from London, whose blocks and dodges all serve to protect his pristine face.

HOY QUARLOW Come on now – even if he is an elderly gentleman, who let him bring a big stick to a boxing match?

RICK BRUISER Watch out when this monstrous fighter jumps – the rumble will stop you moving, allowing a devastating follow-up.

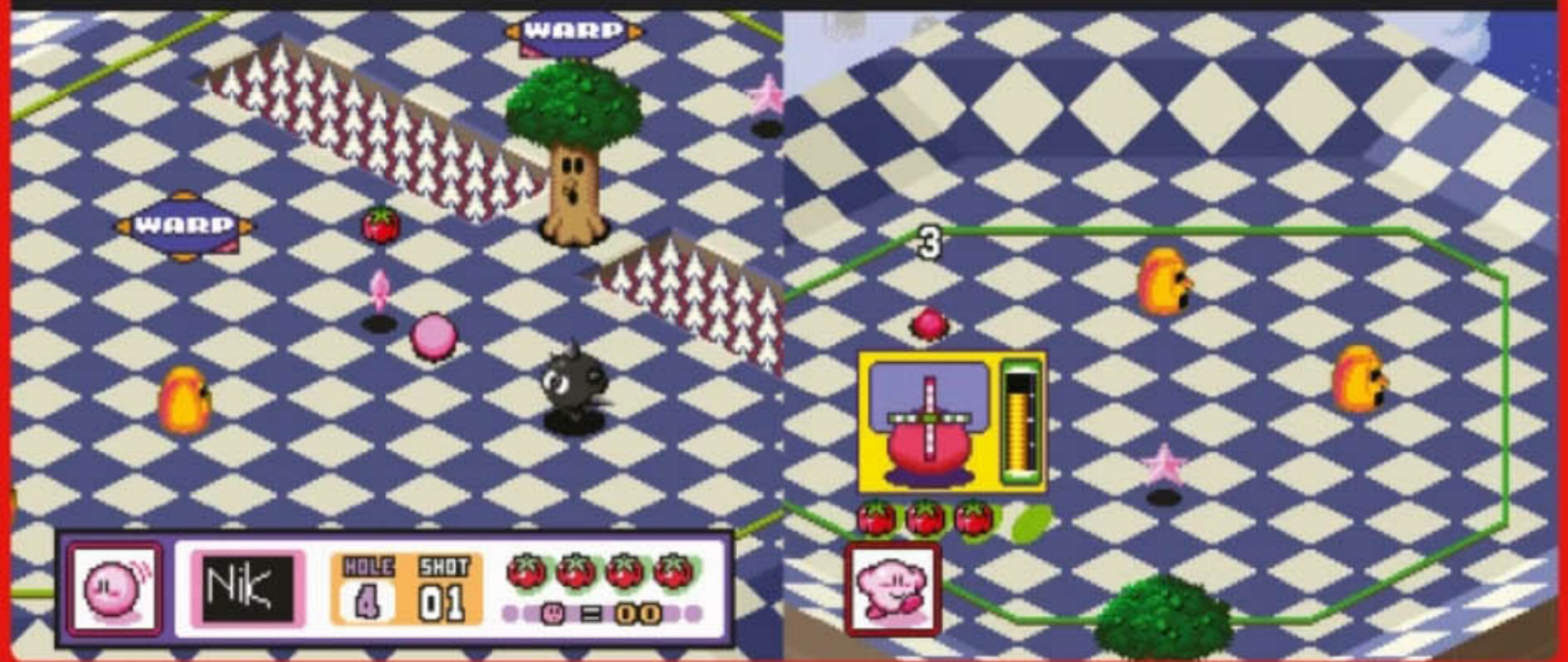
NICK BRUISER Can you topple the champion's undefeated 42-0 record? Probably not, but have fun trying!

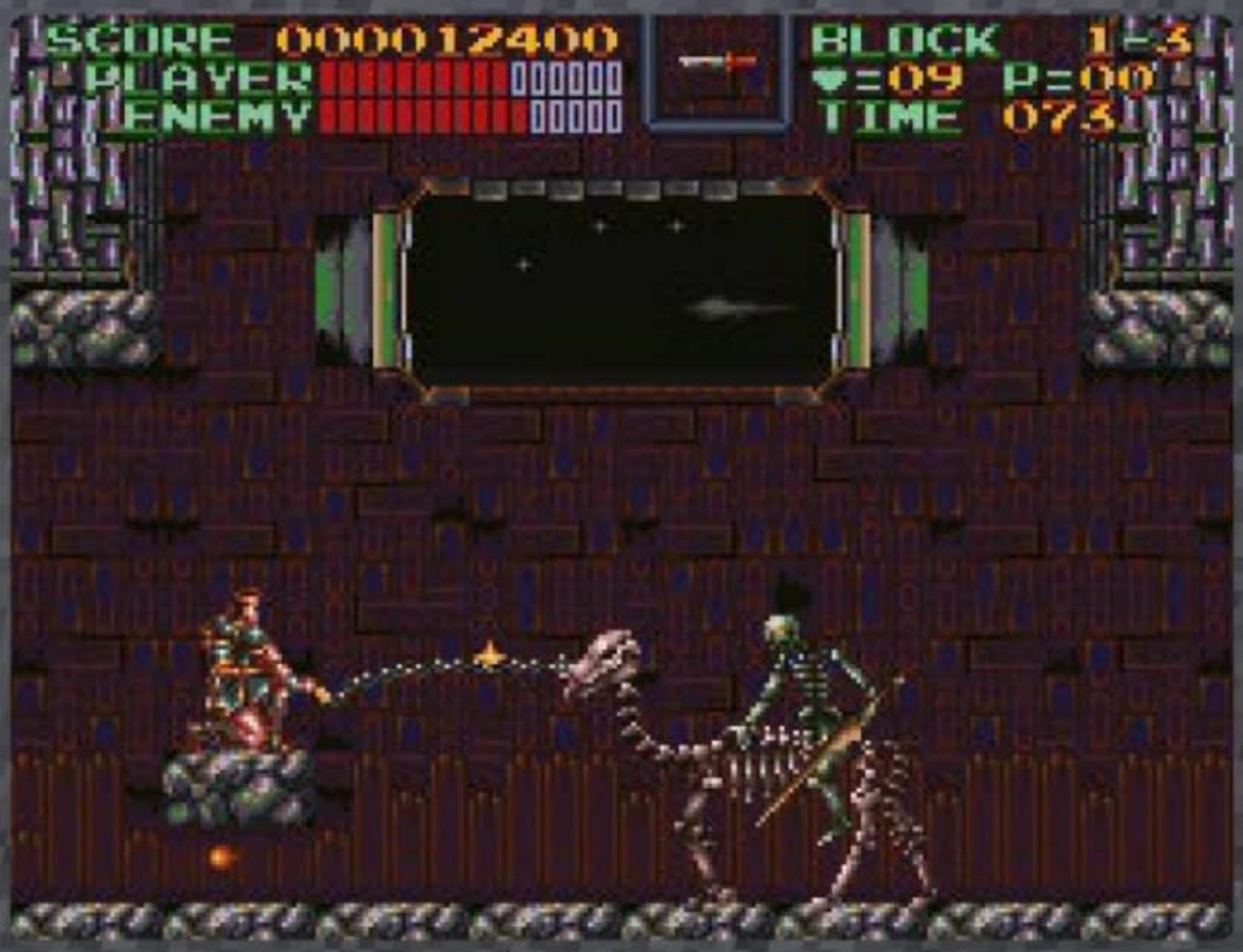
KIRBY'S DREAM COURSE

HIPSTER'S CHOICE

HAL LABORATORY, 1994

If there was a prize for the weirdest inclusion on the Nintendo Classic Mini: SNES, *Kirby's Dream Course* would unquestionably be the game to win it. This isometric crazy golf game tasks you with knocking Kirby around unusual and occasionally deadly courses, with the hole only revealed once you've cleared out the enemies. It's not a bad game, but the fiddly ball physics can render it frustrating, and it's probably the weakest game in the lineup as a result. We can only assume it was included in order to get an extra two-player game in the package and inject some diversity into a roster heavy on platform games and RPGs.





SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV

COOL WHIP

KONAMI, 1991

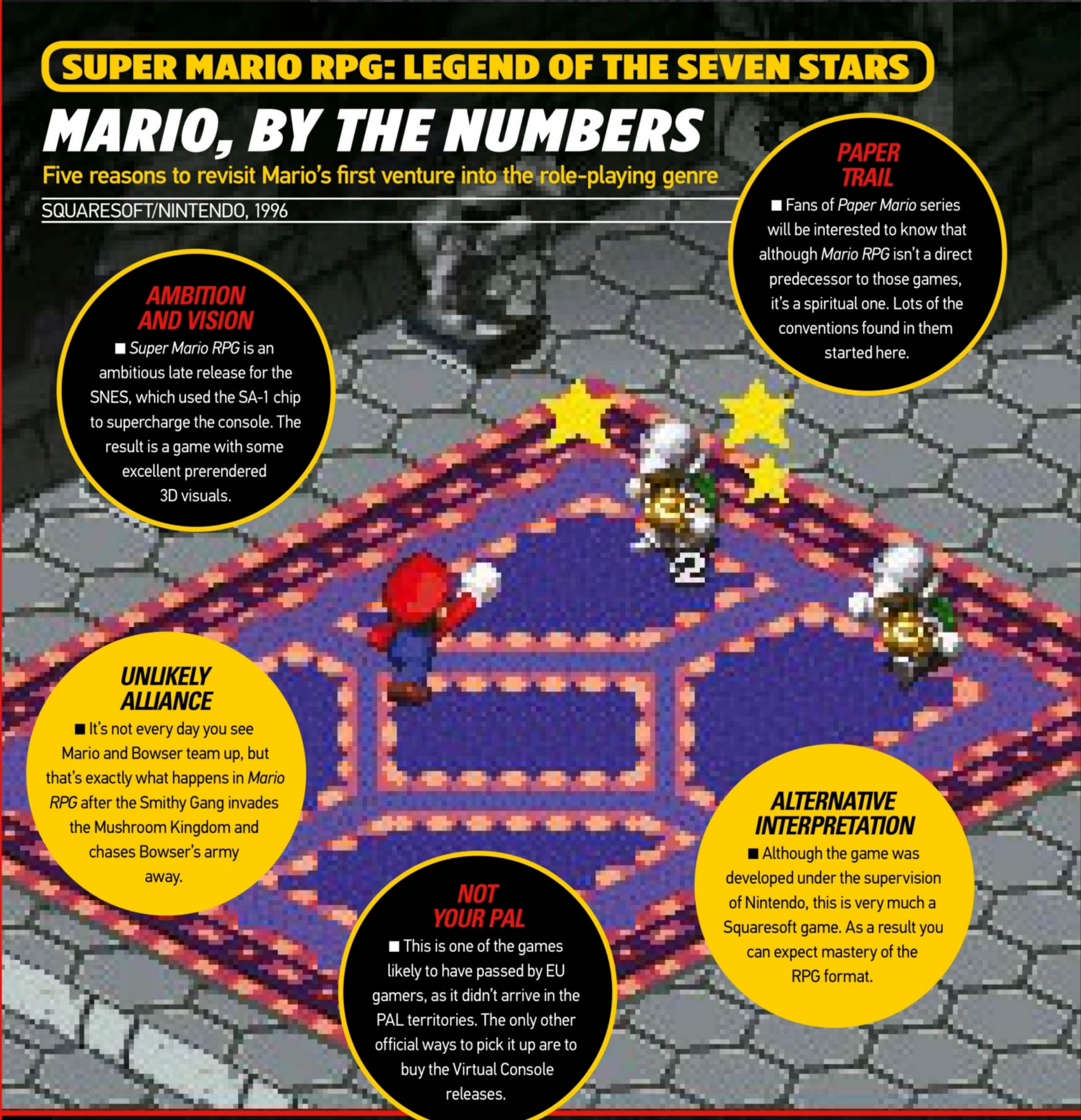
This excellent platformer is a surprising omission from the Japanese line-up for this system, so count yourself lucky that you're getting another chance to hack the undead to bits. The game's friendlier than its predecessors and takes full advantage of the power of the SNES – there's one Mode 7 moment, a tubular tunnel, which is still impressive today. We're pleased to see this one make the cut – while some may have wanted *Vampire's Kiss* as it's harder to get, this is definitely the better game of the two.

SUPER MARIO RPG: LEGEND OF THE SEVEN STARS

MARIO, BY THE NUMBERS

Five reasons to revisit Mario's first venture into the role-playing genre

SQUARESOFT/NINTENDO, 1996



AMBITION AND VISION

■ *Super Mario RPG* is an ambitious late release for the SNES, which used the SA-1 chip to supercharge the console. The result is a game with some excellent prerendered 3D visuals.

PAPER TRAIL

■ Fans of *Paper Mario* series will be interested to know that although *Mario RPG* isn't a direct predecessor to those games, it's a spiritual one. Lots of the conventions found in them started here.

UNLIKELY ALLIANCE

■ It's not every day you see Mario and Bowser team up, but that's exactly what happens in *Mario RPG* after the Smithy Gang invades the Mushroom Kingdom and chases Bowser's army away.

ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION

■ Although the game was developed under the supervision of Nintendo, this is very much a Squaresoft game. As a result you can expect mastery of the RPG format.

NOT YOUR PAL

■ This is one of the games likely to have passed by EU gamers, as it didn't arrive in the PAL territories. The only other official ways to pick it up are to buy the Virtual Console releases.

STAR FOX 2

THE FORGOTTEN MISSION

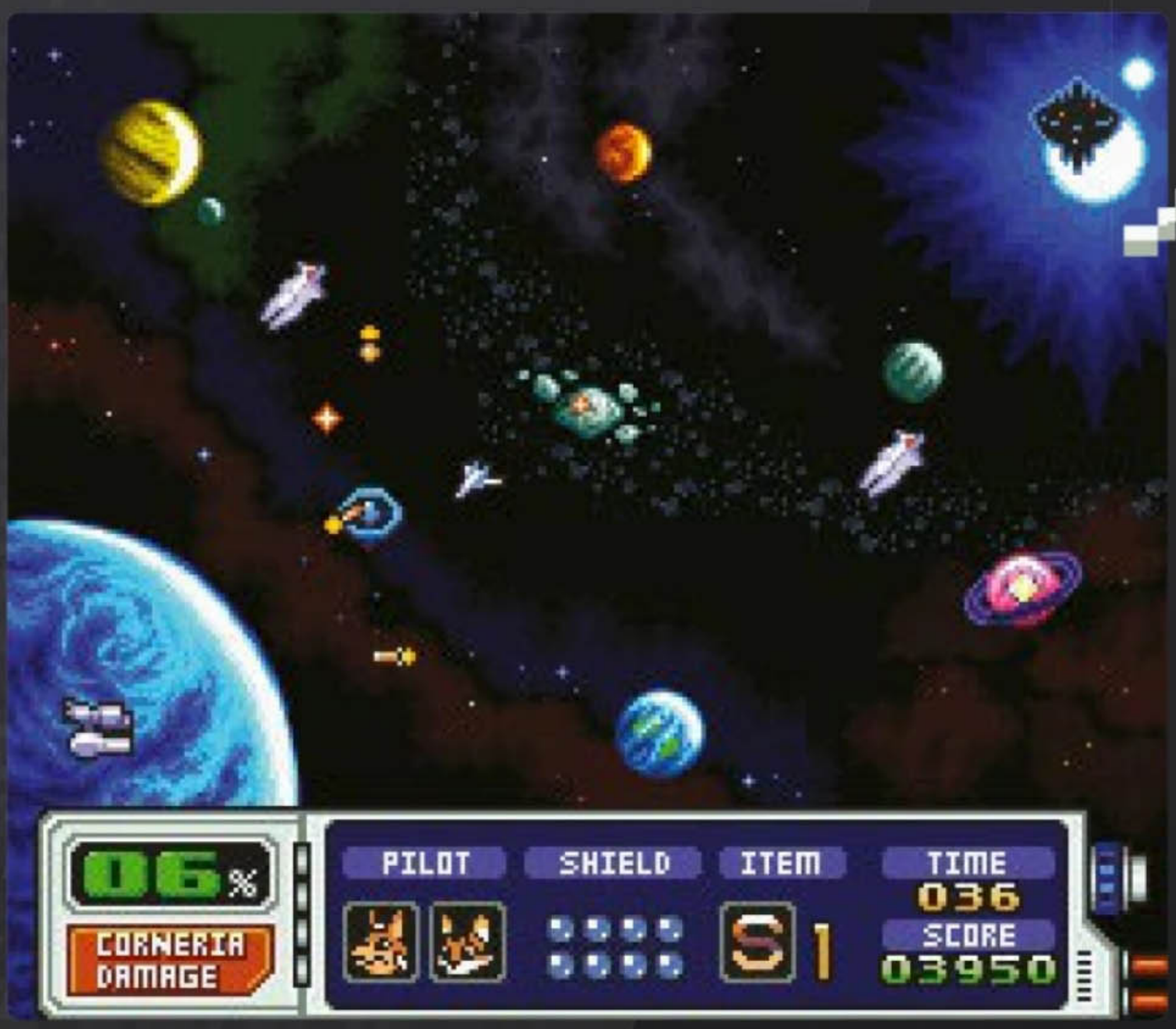
NINTENDO/ARGONAUT, 1995/2017

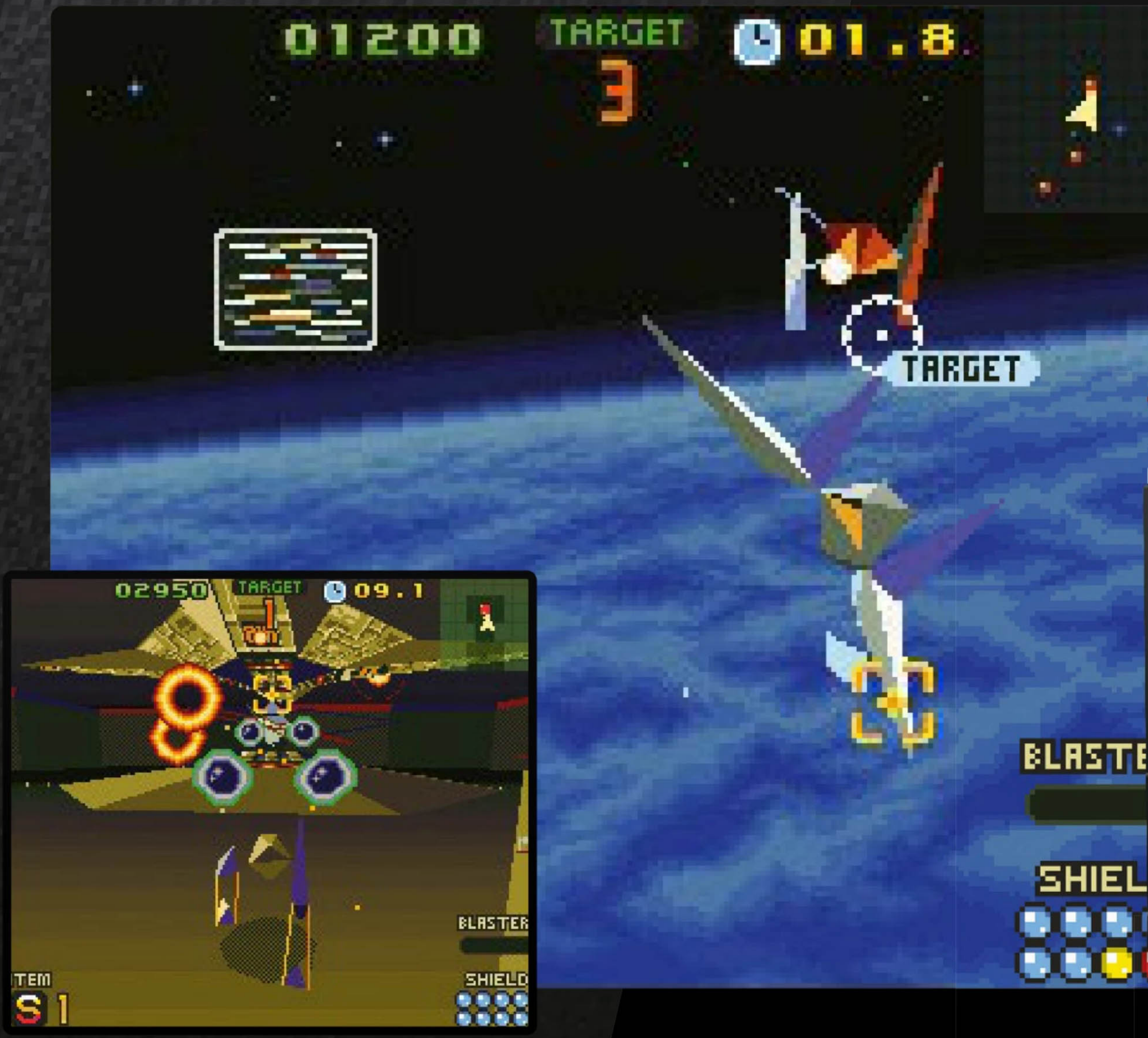
Many of the players who are lucky enough to have gotten through the preorder carnage and start up their brand-new plug-and-play SNES – perhaps even the majority of players – are going to start *Star Fox* immediately, complete the first level and instantly head straight back to the SNES Mini's main menu. 'Why?' You ask. Because that's exactly how you unlock *Star Fox 2*, which is the only 'hidden' game on the device.

Star Fox 2 was famously announced by Nintendo but ultimately cancelled upon completion, and as a result sat dormant in the company's archives for over 20 years. Although prototype versions of the game have leaked over the years, the final version has never been seen by the public. Well, until now. Nintendo has decided that the time is right to resurrect the game, providing the Nintendo Classic Mini: SNES with a completely unique selling point that could even tempt existing owners of mighty SNES collections to part with their cash.

Like the original game, *Star Fox 2* is a space shoot-'em-up which utilises the SuperFX enhancement chip to display 3D graphics that the SNES couldn't manage on its own. This time around, however, the game design is less linear, allowing players to freely choose where they engage the enemy. And much like the more recent *Star Fox* games, The Arwing is also not the only playable vehicle, as players get to use a walker on planet surfaces.

If you're a big fan of the *Star Fox* series, you'll most definitely have a lot of fun spotting the bits and pieces that later made it into games like *Star Fox 64* and *Star Fox Command*. For the rest of us, it's a fun piece of history that joins *Earthbound: Beginnings* as a welcome example of Nintendo's approach to releasing its previously unreleased, yet unforgotten, games.





Q&A: DYLAN CUTHBERT

The former Argonaut coder discusses this long-overdue sequel

***Star Fox 2* was finished in the mid-Nineties – why wasn't it released then?**

The PlayStation and Saturn had just come out and we just couldn't compete with them for framerate and quality. Nintendo made a strategic decision to delay their 3D releases until the Nintendo 64 was ready.

What was your reaction when you found out that players would finally get to play the game?

I was over the moon!

What can fans of the original *Star Fox* look forward to in the sequel?

A lot more strategy and a clever encounter system, along with some full-3D roaming and platforming.

Did the team's extra experience with the SuperFX chip allow for any technical improvements over the original?

Yes, I rewrote massive swathes of the original's system to allow more parallel processing. Also the chip is twice the speed, so that helped also.

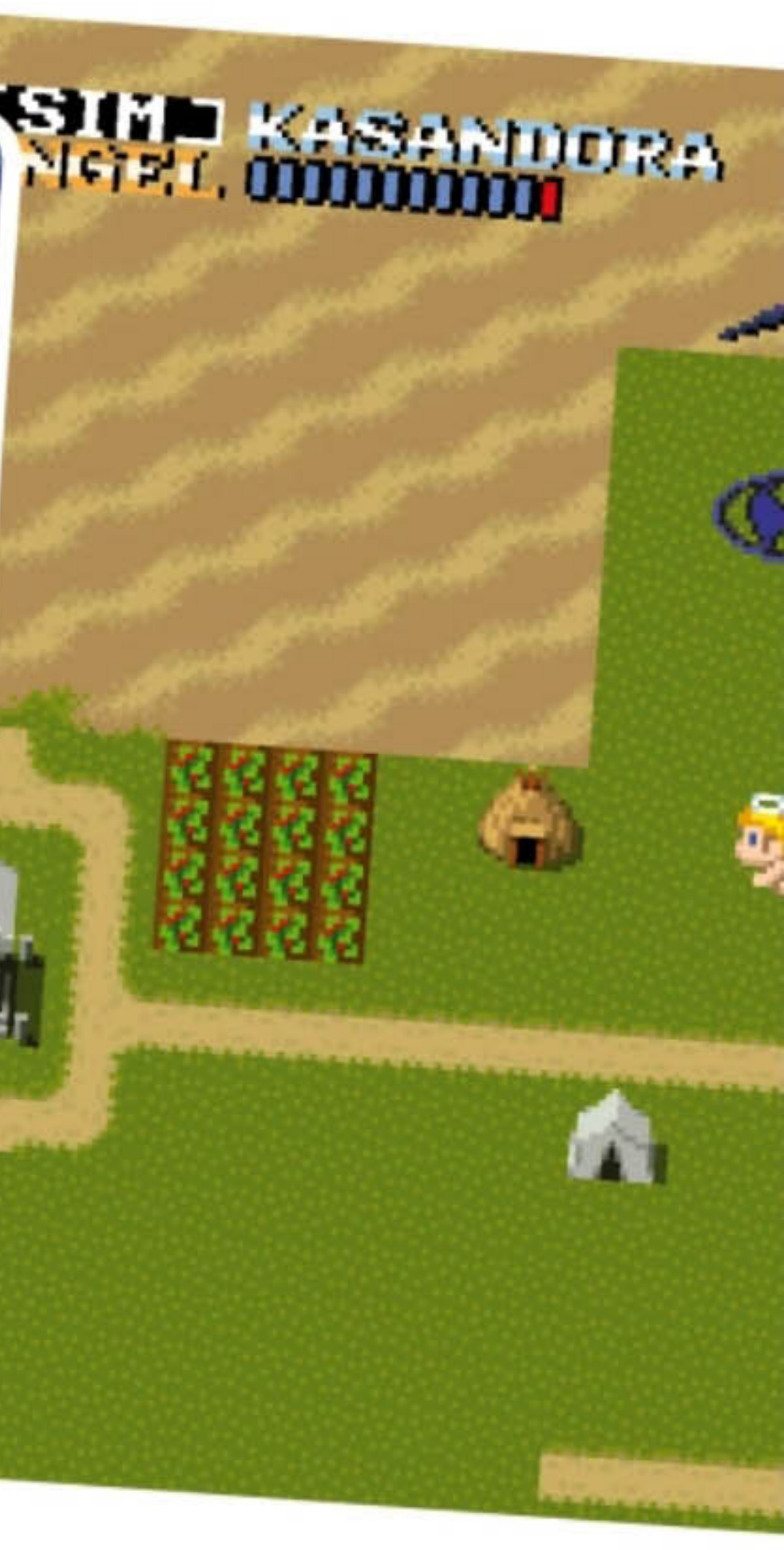
How does the final version differ from the leaked versions that exist online?

Well it's been through the extensive quality assurance and game balancing process, has no debug info on the screen and is a thoroughly complete experience.

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
NINTENDO CLASSIC MINI
Nintendo
20+1 GAMES PRE-INSTALLED*
20+1 JEUX PREINSTALLÉS*
12
USK 12

why you must PLAY

TIME 167
SCORE 1100



ACTRAISER

ActRaiser
▶ CONTINUE
NEW GAME
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
COPYRIGHT 1991 ENIX/QUINTET
LICENSED BY NINTENDO

QUINTET'S 16-BIT CLASSIC REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE GAMES ON THE SNES, DELIVERING A MIX OF ACTION AND SIMULATION THAT NO OTHER GAME HAS EVER BEEN ABLE TO MATCH. FAMED FOR ITS FANTASTIC AUDIO SCORE AND SUPERB LOOKING VISUALS, THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO REVISIT THIS EVERGREEN FAVOURITE. JUST DON'T TALK TOO MUCH ABOUT THE SEQUEL…

» **PUBLISHER:** ENIX CORPORATION
» **DEVELOPER:** QUINTET
» **RELEASED:** 1990
» **GENRE:** PLATFORMER/GOD SIM

Games that straddle genres are always a difficult sell, so it comes as no surprise that Quintet's outrageously polished *ActRaiser* didn't find the fanbase it deserved when first released. Part scrolling slash-'em-up, part God sim, *ActRaiser* was like nothing else around upon its arrival in 1990, and three years later, when it appeared on UK shelves, it still managed to stand apart from virtually every other available SNES game.

Maybe it was the fact that it arrived three years too late, (although aesthetically it still stood head and shoulders over a great many other SNES offerings), or perhaps the mish-mash playing styles were too conflicting. Nevertheless, despite receiving praise in numerous magazines at the time, *ActRaiser* didn't exactly set the charts alight – a shame as it's a wonderfully unique experience that offers plenty of outstanding gaming moments for those willing to track it down.

It's never easy being a God and the being you control in *ActRaiser* is having a particularly hard time with his newfound divinity. The people of the world he oversees are crying out for spiritual guidance and need protecting from the many vicious monsters that your nemesis Tanzra has unleashed into the world. Only when all six realms have been secured will Tanzra's resting place finally be revealed and give you a chance of stopping your monstrous

ONE SEQUEL TOO MANY

Considering how perfectly crafted the original game was you'd have expected a sequel to be even better. Sadly, *ActRaiser 2* was a huge fall from grace that wasn't a patch on its inspiration. Granted, Yuzo Koshiro's score was as good as ever and the graphics were to die for, but somewhere along the line Quintet had forgotten to include the all-important gameplay. Worst yet, the sim sections had been abandoned, meaning that *ActRaiser 2* was no different to many of the other scrolling fighters that were available. With its horrifically clunky controls, the insane difficulty and poor level design, *ActRaiser 2* is perfect proof that sometimes you can only bottle lightning once.

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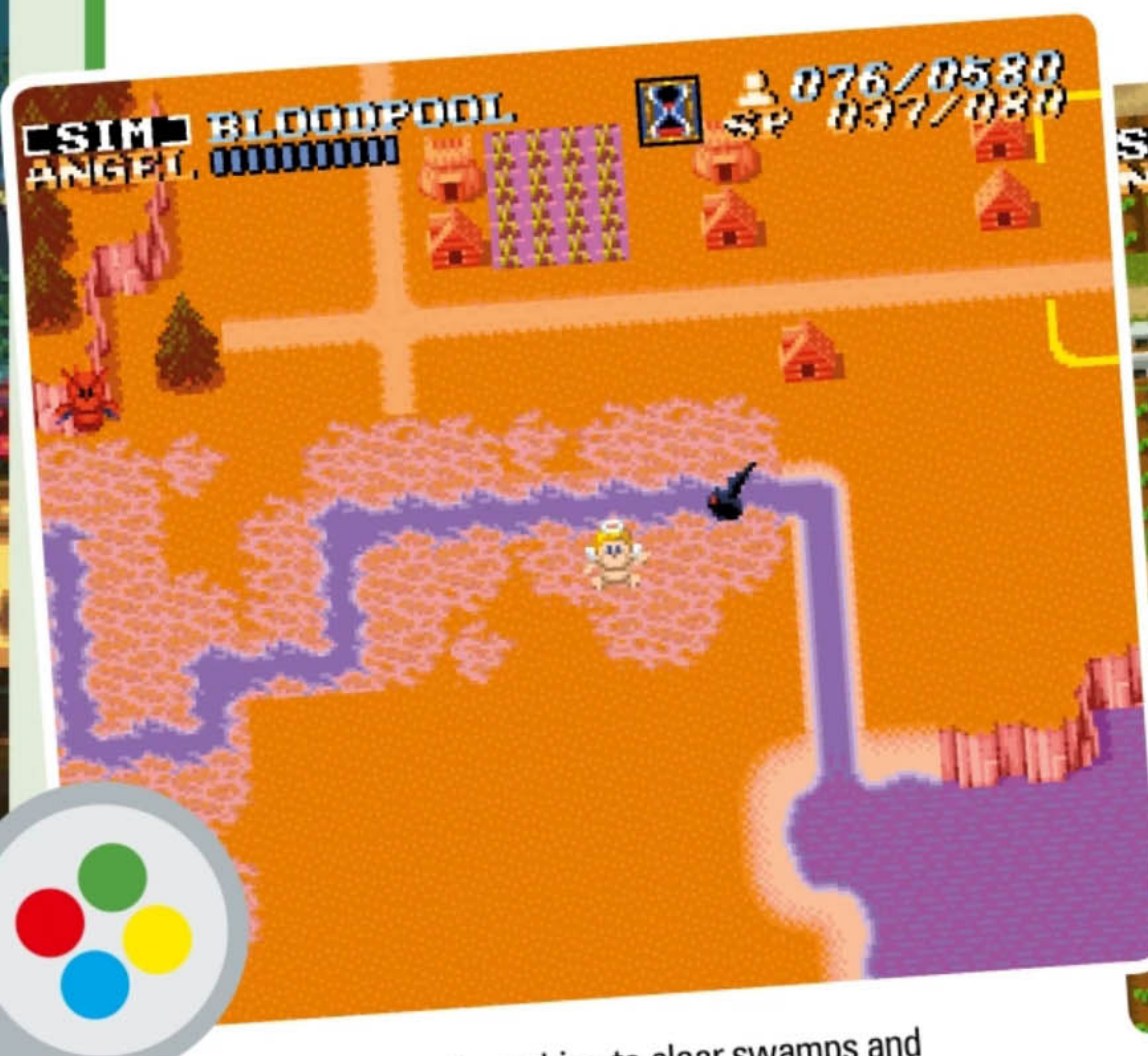
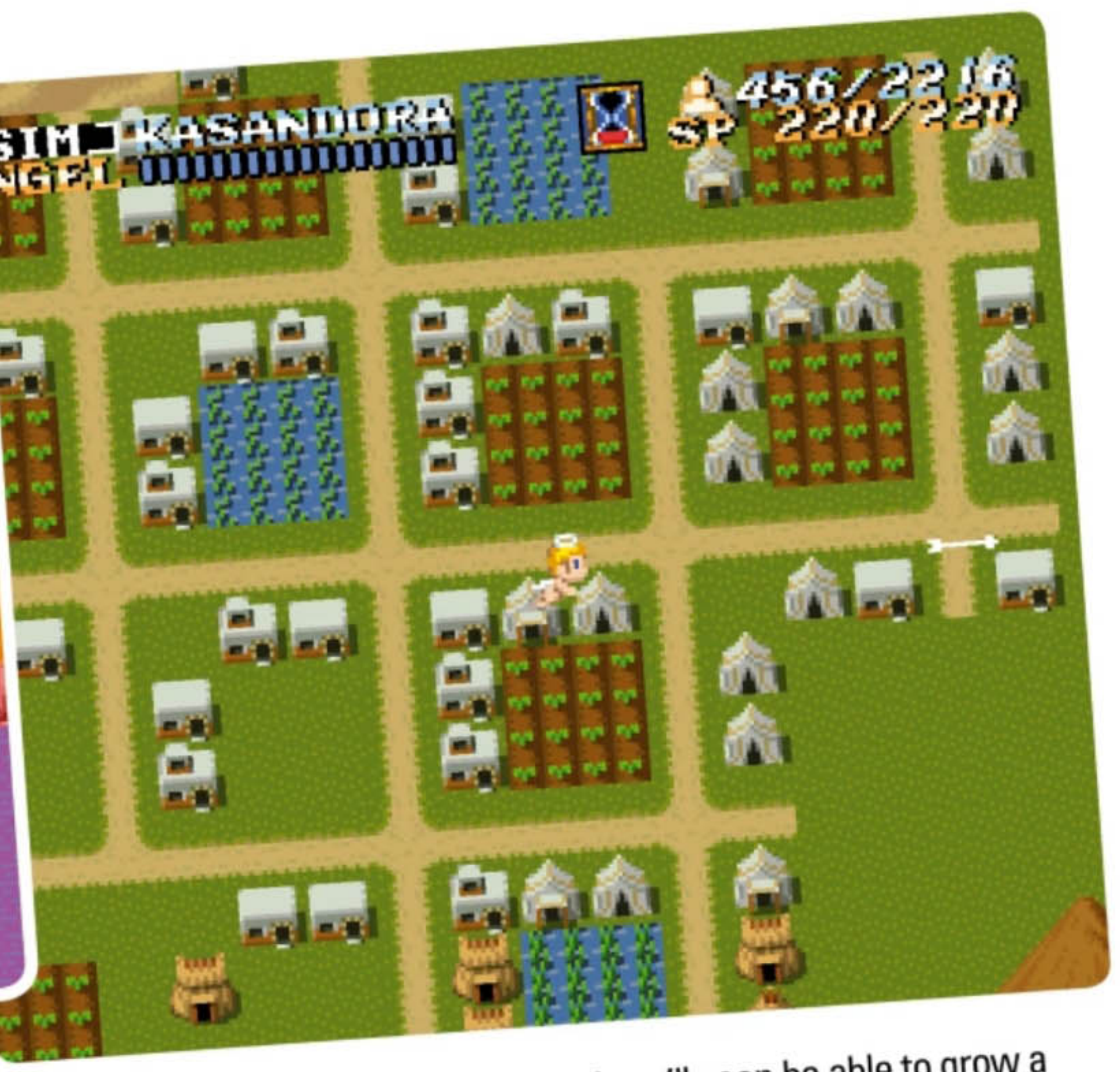
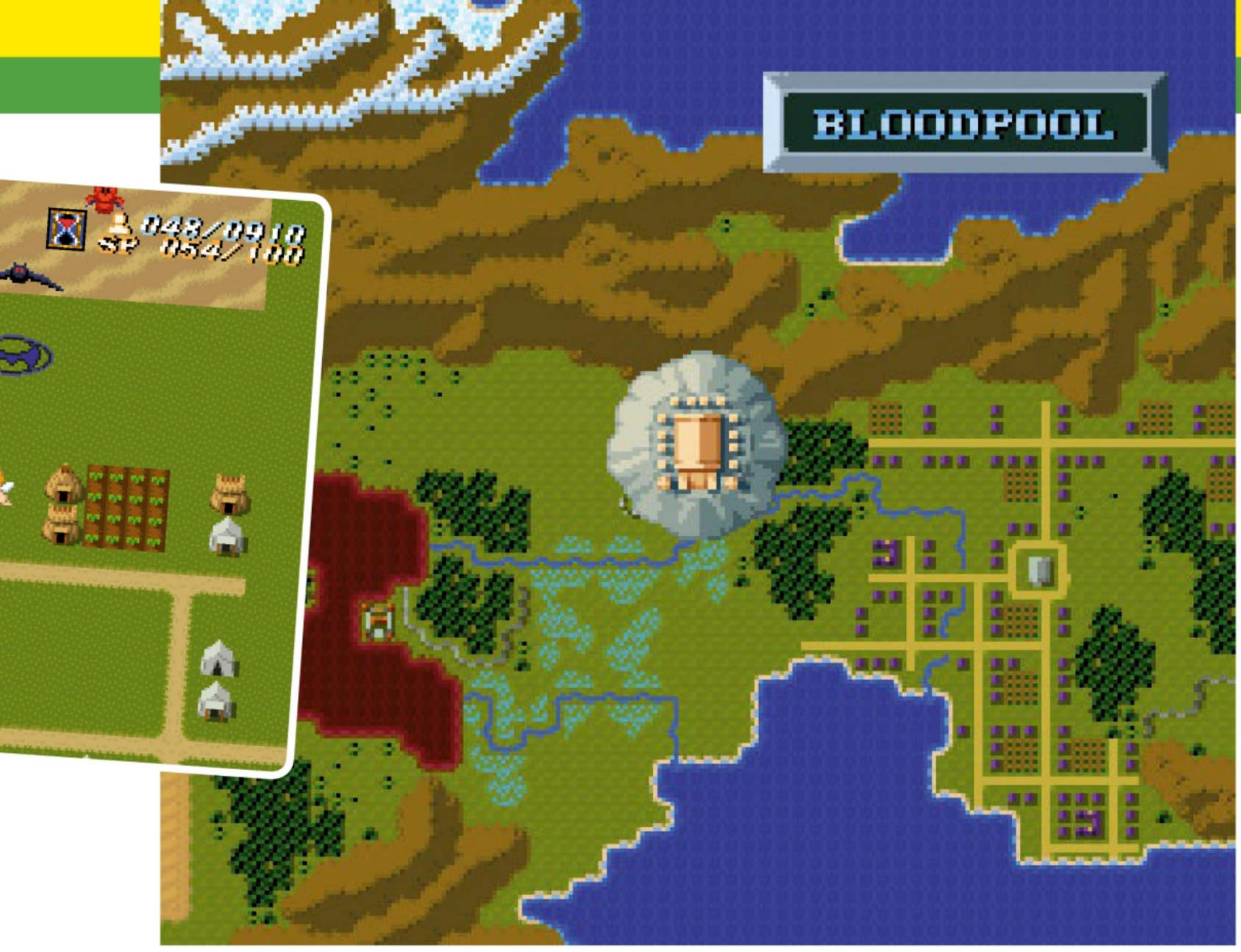
1P-00000250
92
HI-00100000



» Use the power of sunshine to clear swamps and make them habitable for your followers.



» Keep building up your lands and you'll soon be able to grow a selection of different crops. Alright… just two.



» The Sky Palace is the home of your god and allows you to travel across the Mode 7 world.

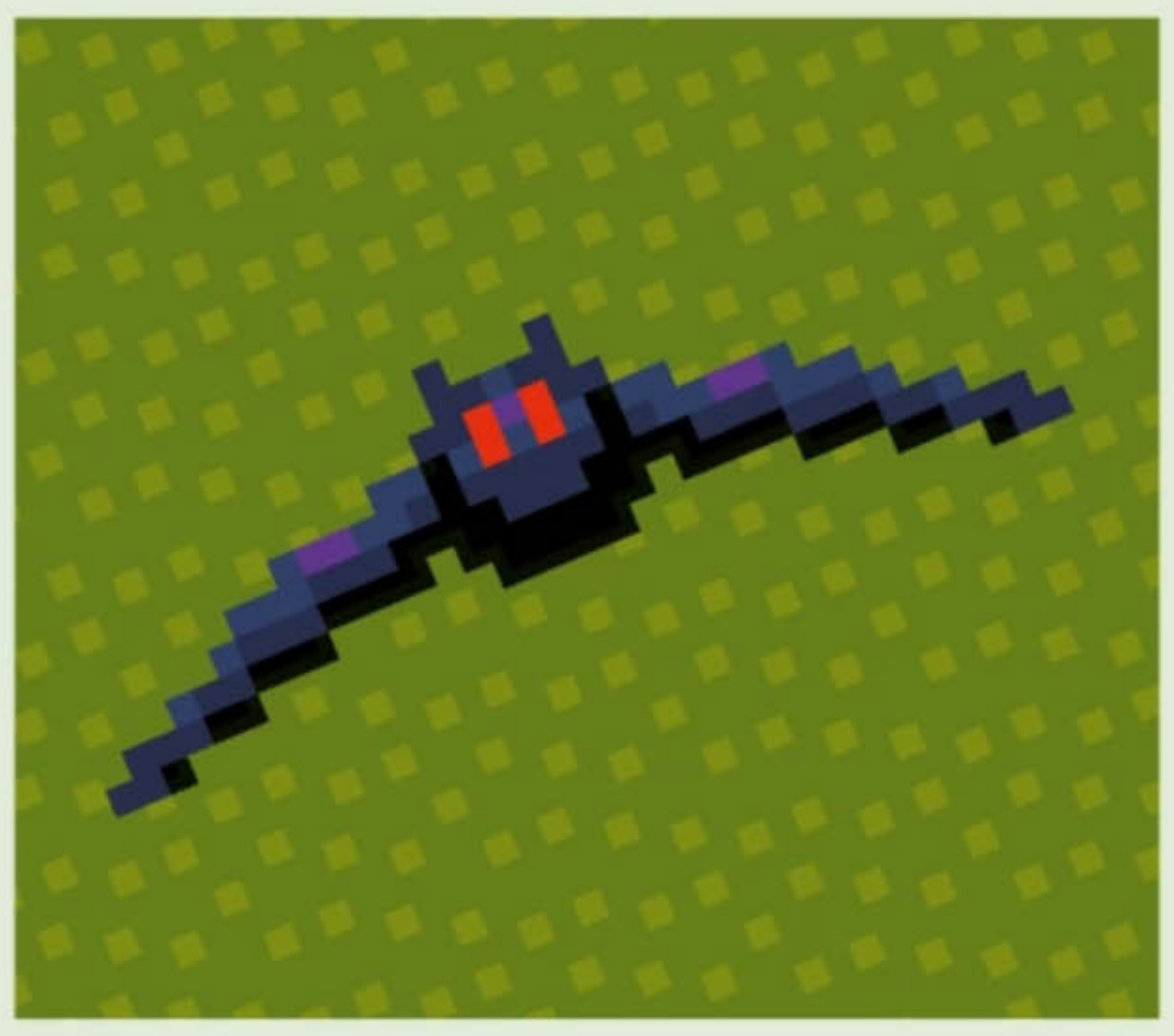
foe once and for all, but before that happens, you've got plenty of work to occupy your divine hands.

Fortunately, you're aided throughout your adventure by an affable angel, who not only fills in the role as personal advisor, but also acts as a controllable avatar for when you're let loose in *ActRaiser*'s sim sections. Full of useful information, he'll constantly give you subtle hints to ease your progress through the game and acts as a go-between for you and your followers. He's a charming creation and by the end of the game you'll have built up quite a rapport with the little fella. It's this interaction between yourself and the game that proves to be one of *ActRaiser*'s in strengths. One section sees you rescuing a young boy called Teddy, only to be told by your angel companion at *ActRaiser*'s poignant finale that the young lad had died earlier, but you weren't told for fear of getting upset. Quintet's opus sucks you in, and despite not having a single cutscene *ActRaiser* boasts a cinematic quality that few other 16-bit titles can muster. Indeed, everything about Quintet's game is on an impressively grand scale, and as it deftly switches between genres, like a great rollercoaster, you can't help but be taken along for the ride. Well we say rollercoaster, but *ActRaiser* is more akin to a log-flume. The sim sections are equivalent to the slow steady climb to the ride's zenith while *ActRaiser*'s outrageously good battles are comparable to the flume's final dizzying drop. And like all good rides, as soon as you've finished it, you'll be instantly returning for another go.

Ah yes, the action sections. Granted, the animation might not impress like it once did, and practically every boss you face is deceptively easy to defeat, but goddamn, they're still enjoyable to play through. Crammed with amazing attention to detail, the countryside you hack and slash your way through would be the perfect place to stop for a picnic if it wasn't for the many monsters you continually face. From the lush verdant forests of Fillmore, to the icy wastes of Northwall, *ActRaiser*'s environments are breathtaking in scope and many of them (Aitos and Northwall in particular) can still draw the odd gasp of wonderment. It wasn't just the locations that had been given plenty of care and attention, as the many opponents you face off against (particularly some of the huge bosses) add to *ActRaiser*'s graphical grandeur. Animation may look rather basic

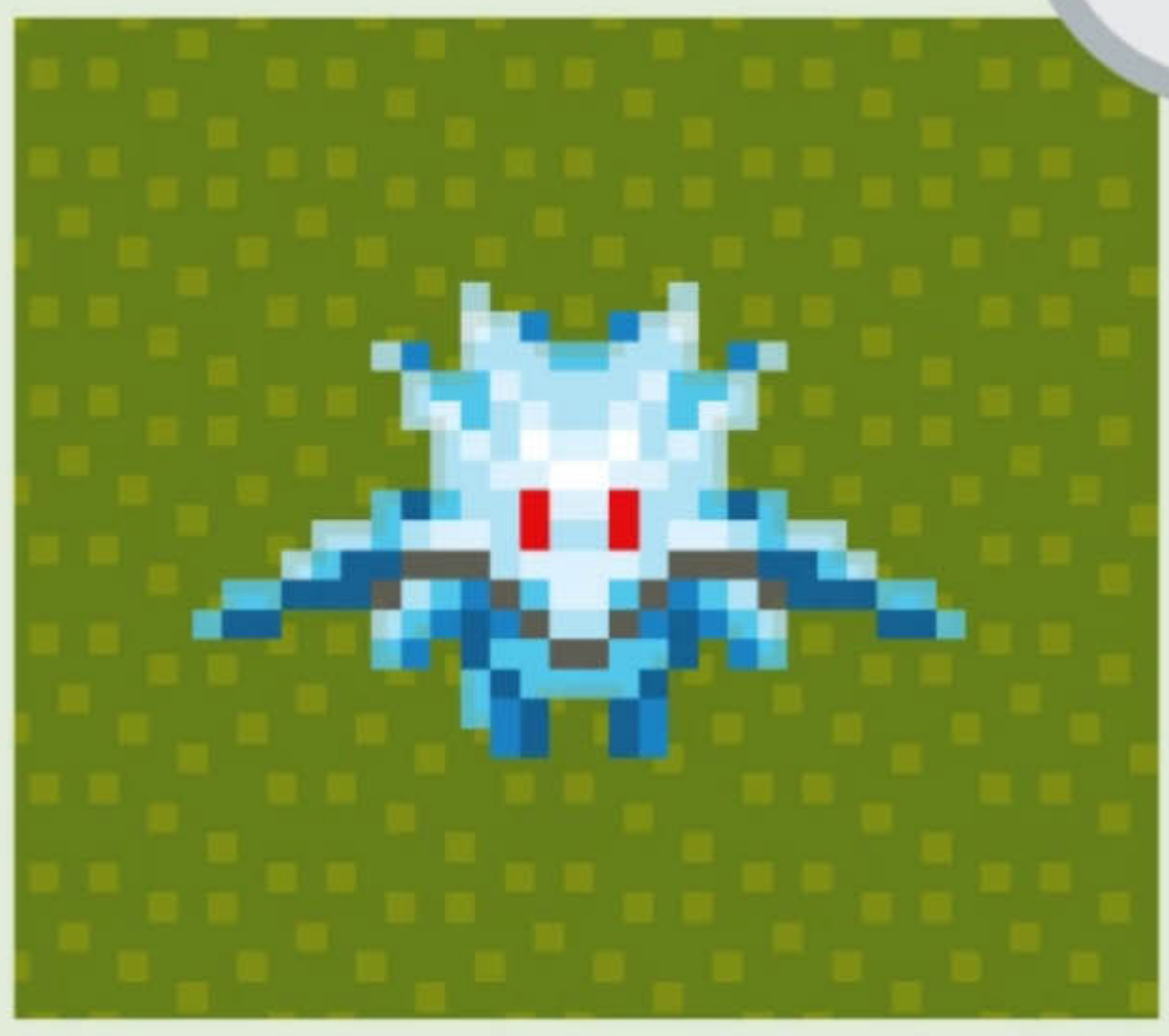
KNOW YOUR FOE

Just a few of the enemies you should look out for



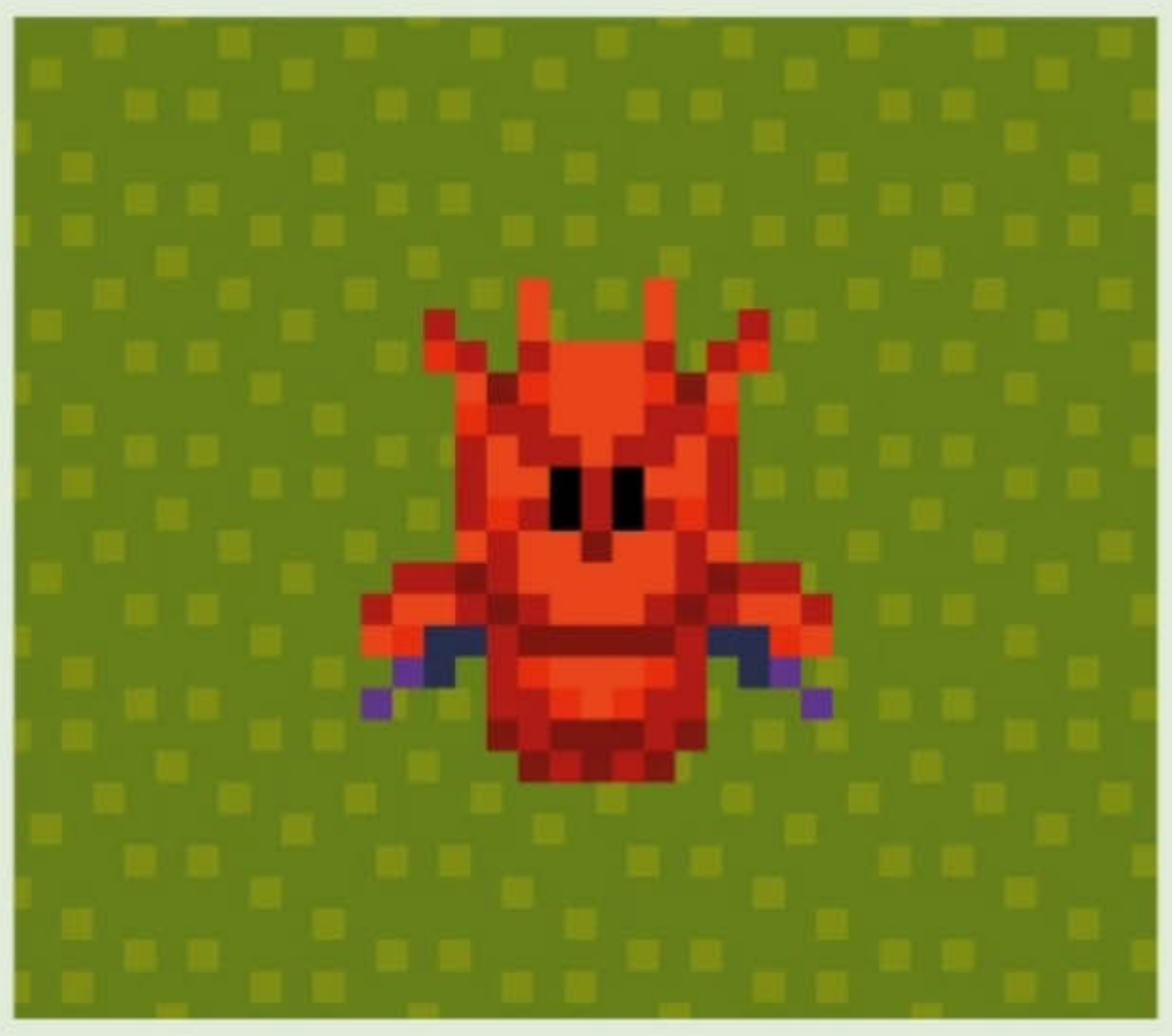
BAT

Carries off followers whenever it gets the chance. Can be killed with a single shot from your angel's bow.



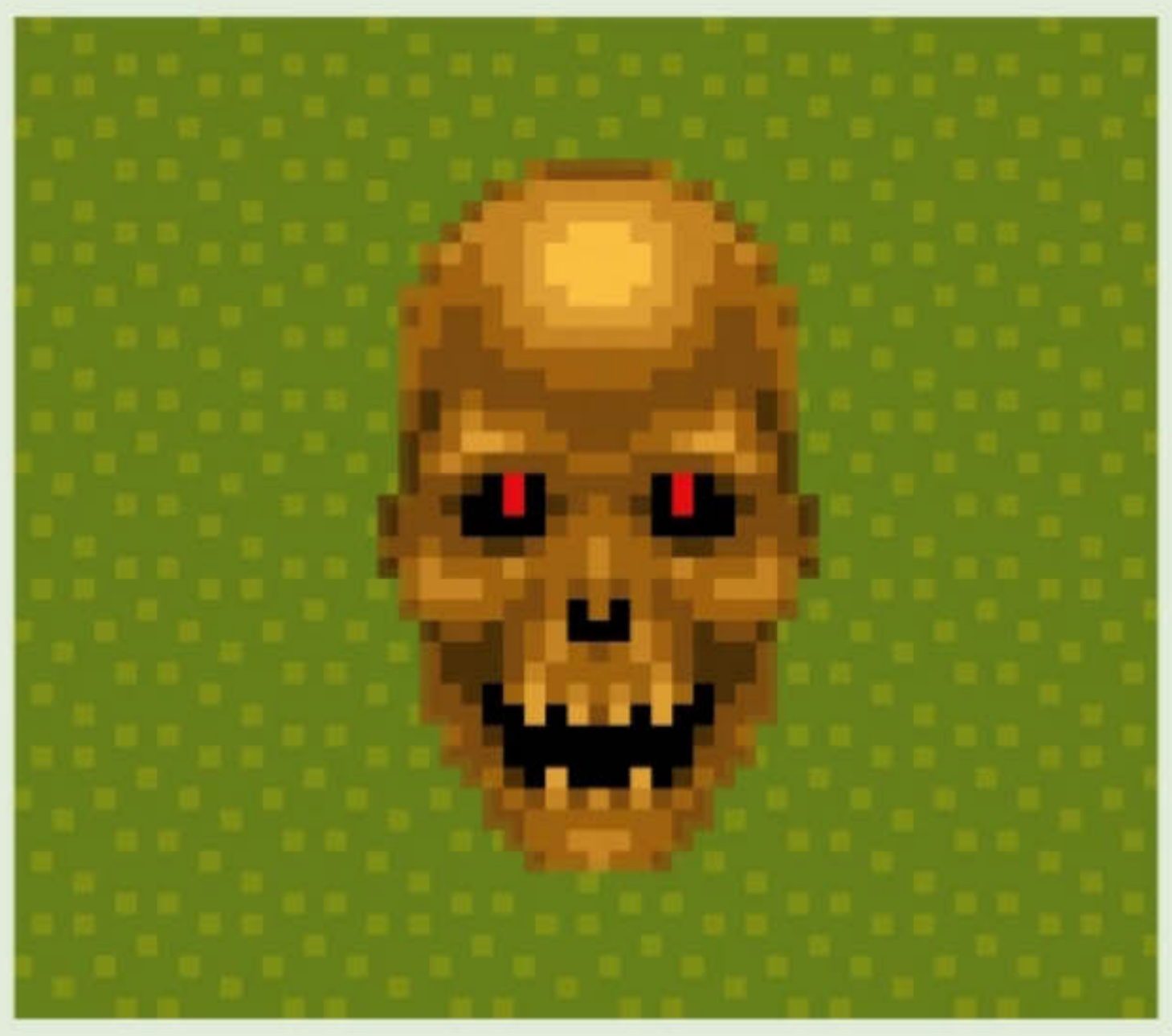
DRAGON

Uses lightning to destroy houses. Can be killed with two hits from your angel's bow.



IMP

Destroys crops. Can be killed with three hits from your angel's bow.



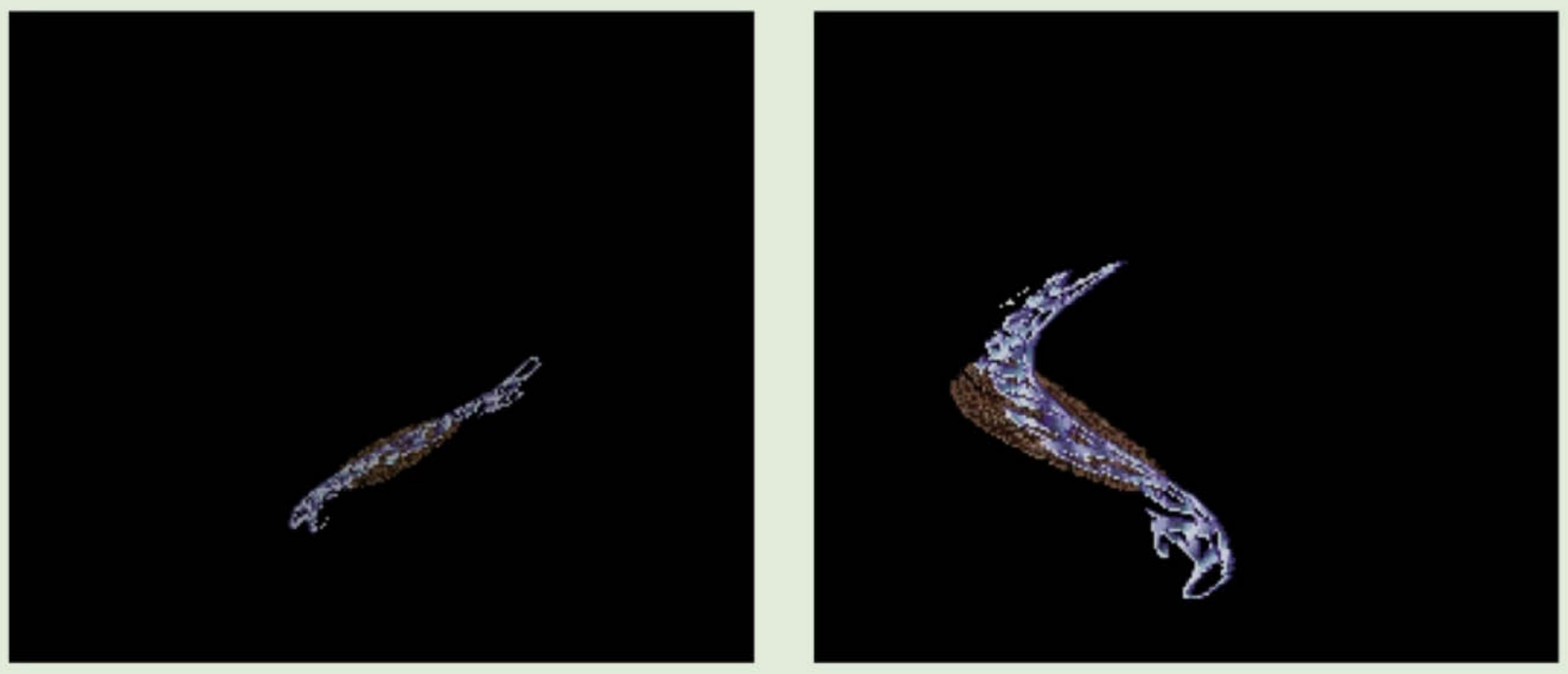
SKULLS

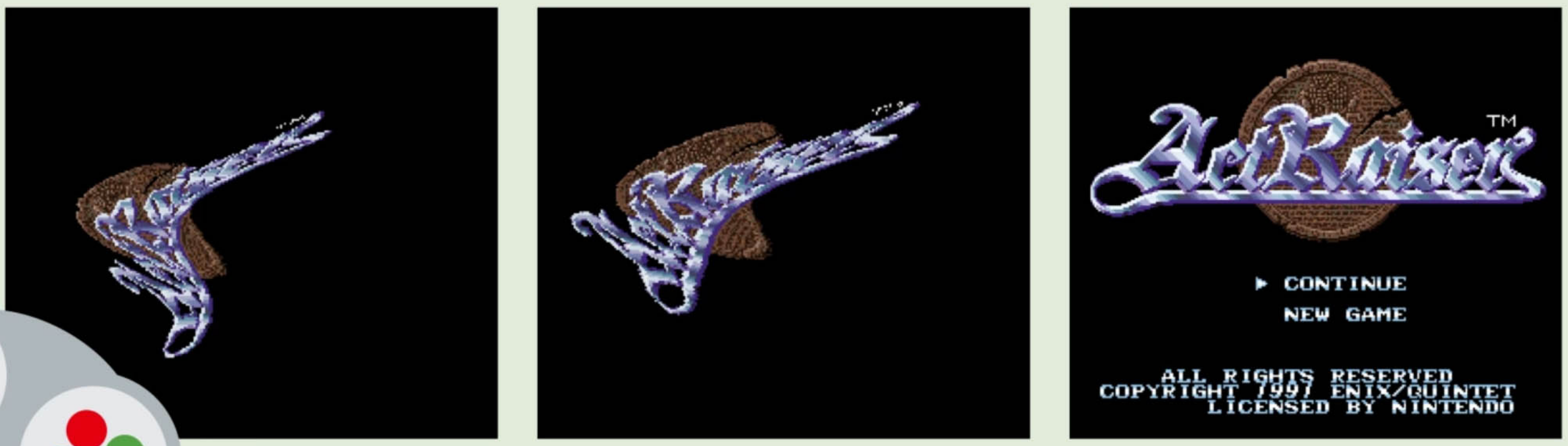
Creates devastating earthquakes that cripple villages. Can be killed with seven shots from your angel's bow.

> "EVERYTHING ABOUT QUINTET'S GAME IS ON AN IMPRESSIVELY GRAND SCALE"

MAGICAL MOMENT

The game's not even started yet, but look how amazing the title screen is. Using the SNES's nifty Mode 7 the *ActRaiser* logo swirls around the screen to some truly excellent music. This is the stuff dreams are made of. Look at it swirling around, wooo, it's actually quite hypnotic. We could sit and watch this for hours, just losing ourselves in its silvery world.

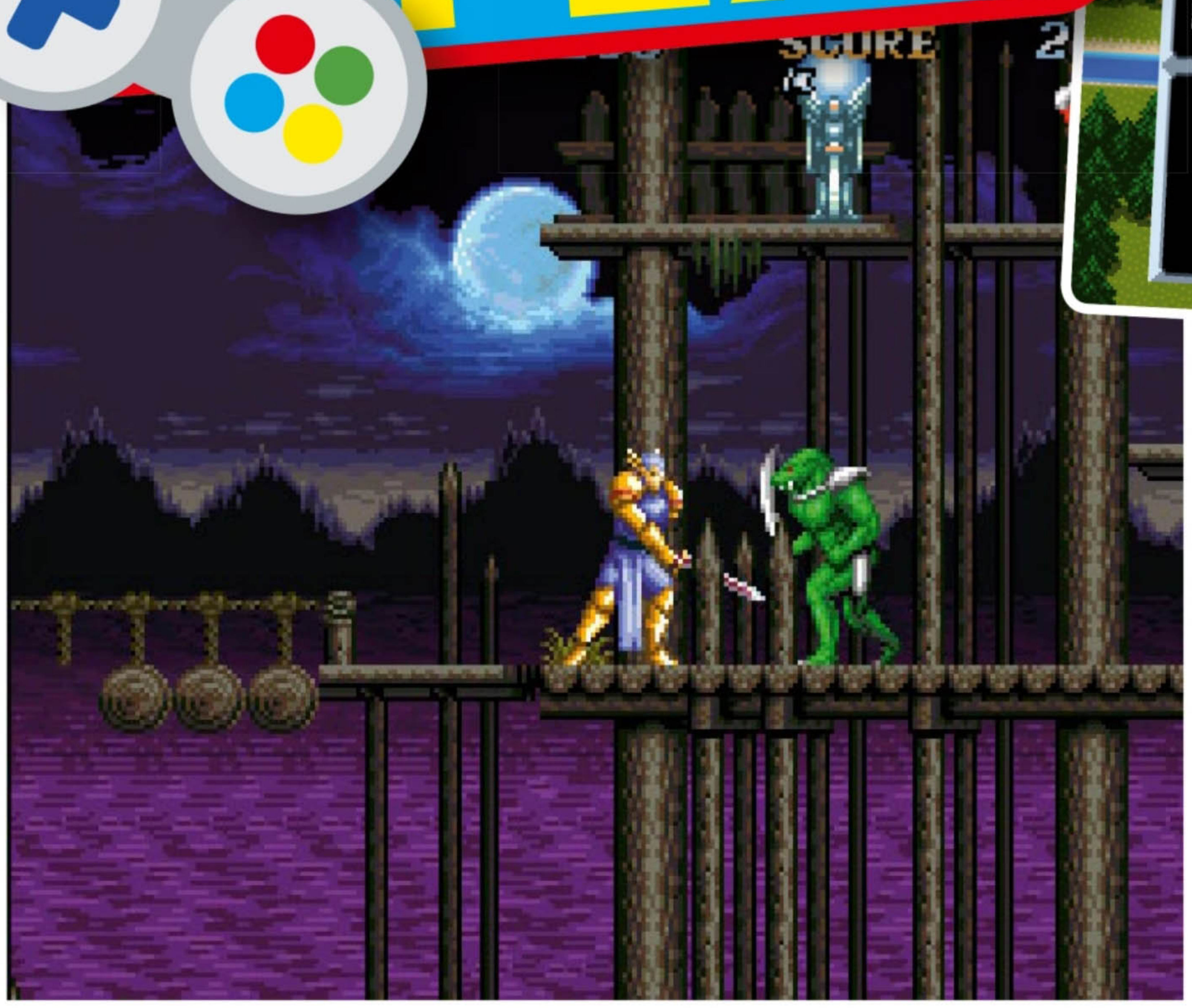




SIM
ANGEL
KASANDORA
328/2048
200/200

» Your poor followers are suffering from the plague. Surely one of the neighbouring countries has a cure?

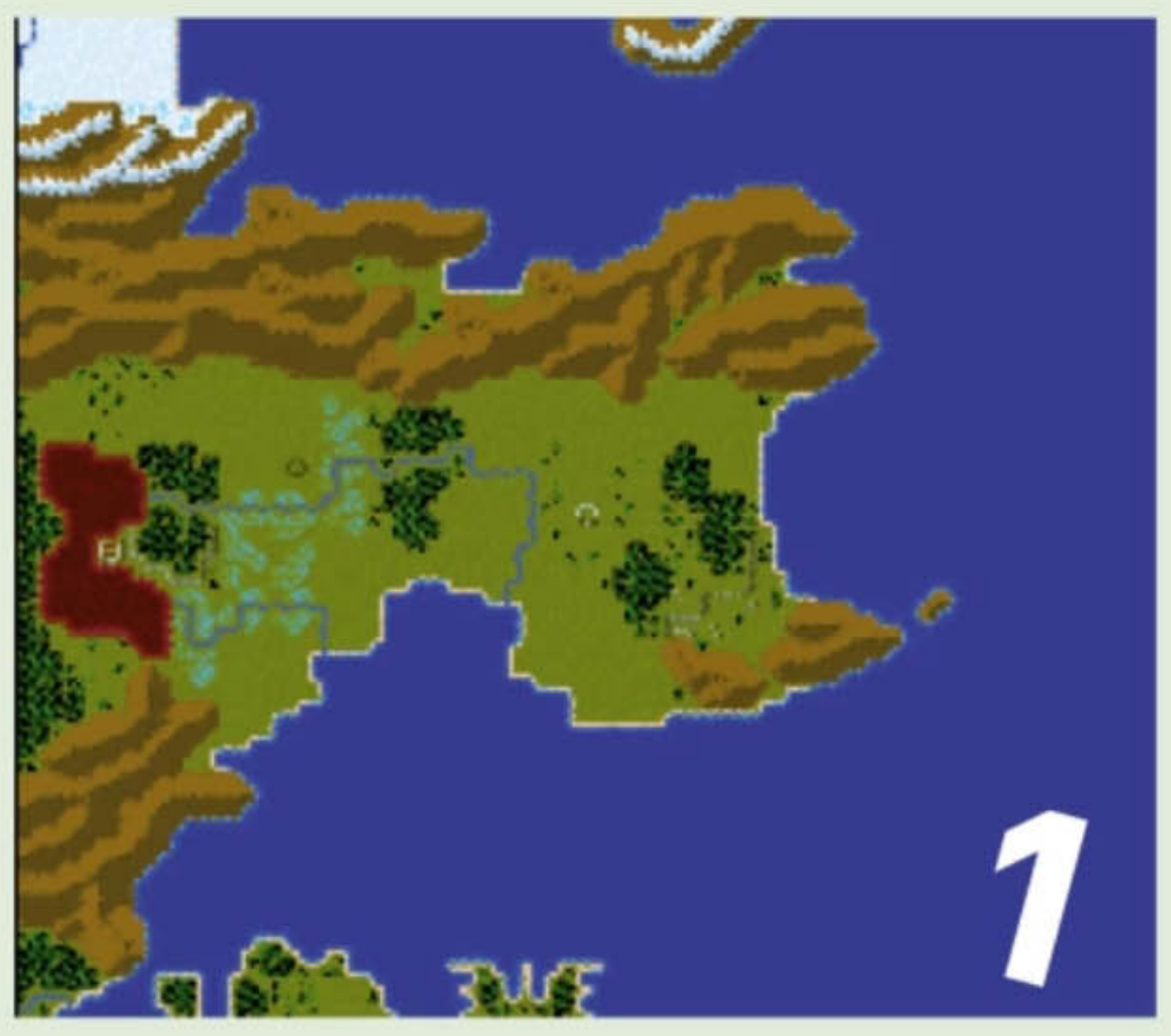
why you must PLAY



» The landscape may look gorgeous but it's filled with all sorts of dangers.

REMEMBER WHEN?

Some of the most jaw-dropping moments in *ActRaiser* occur when you're about to enter a new battle. Beginning high above the Mode 7 landscape you zoom towards the ground, which continually rotates on your approach. As your descent continues, a slowly building orchestra sounds off in the background. It's a breathtaking scene that still impresses today.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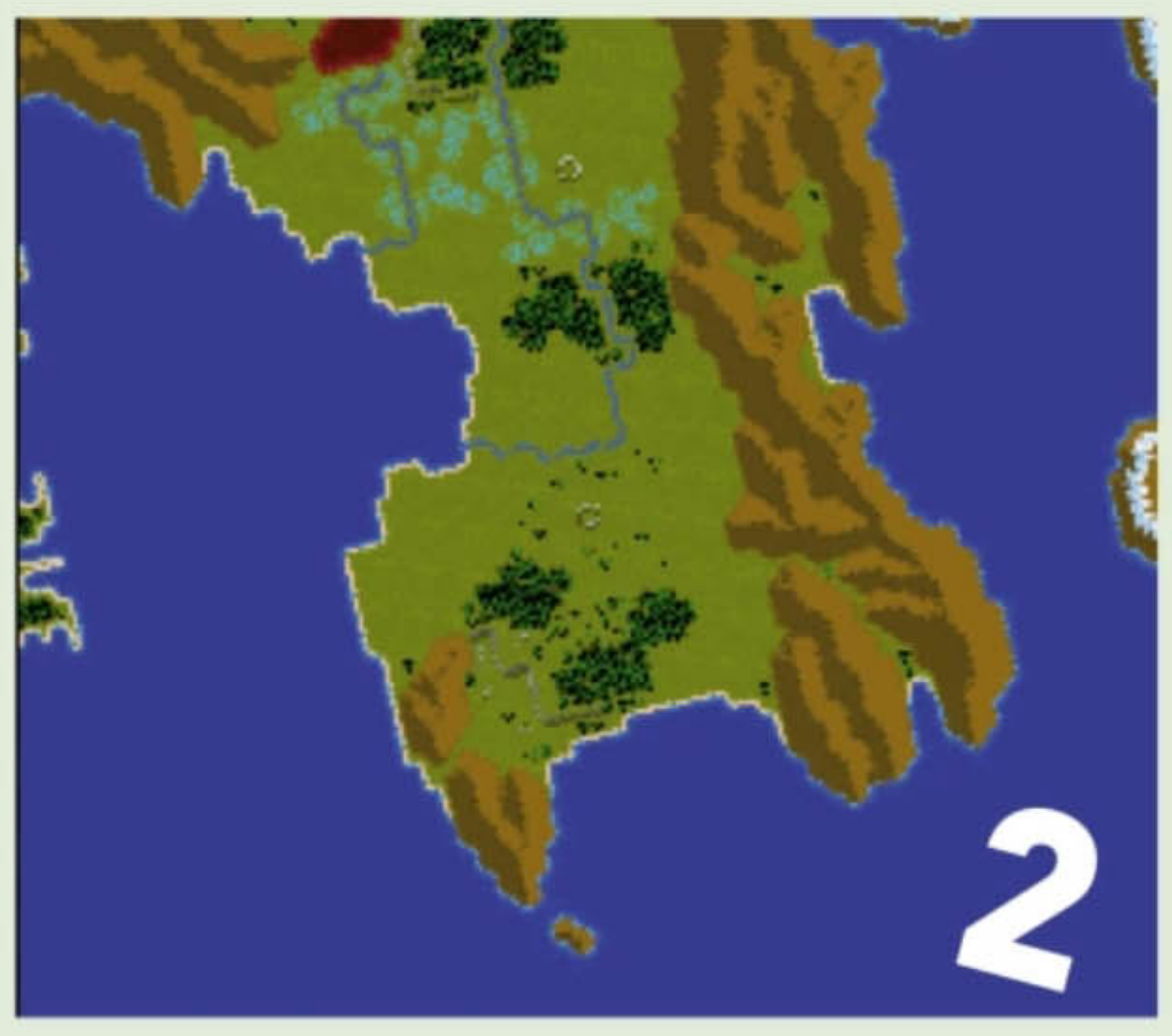
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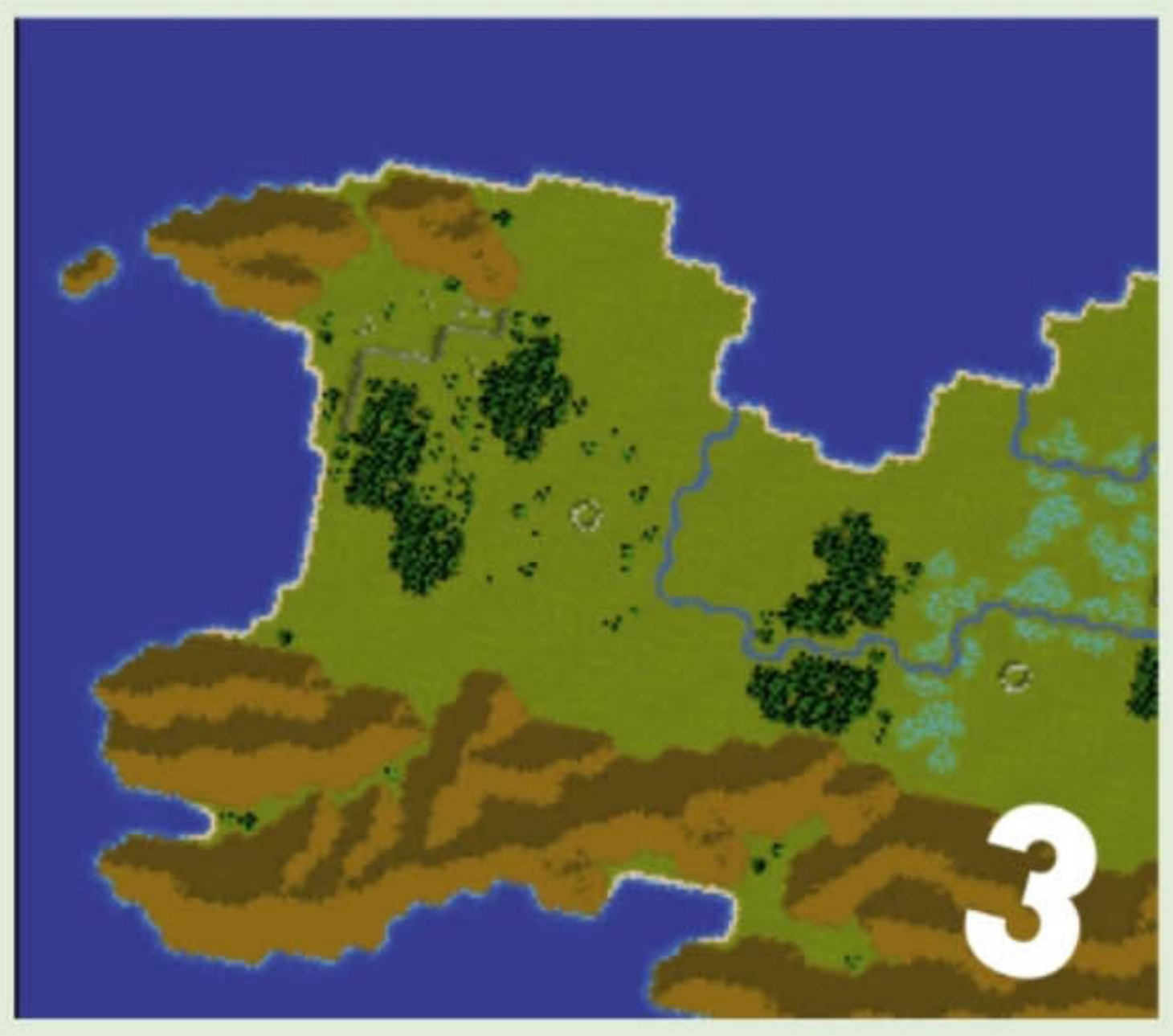
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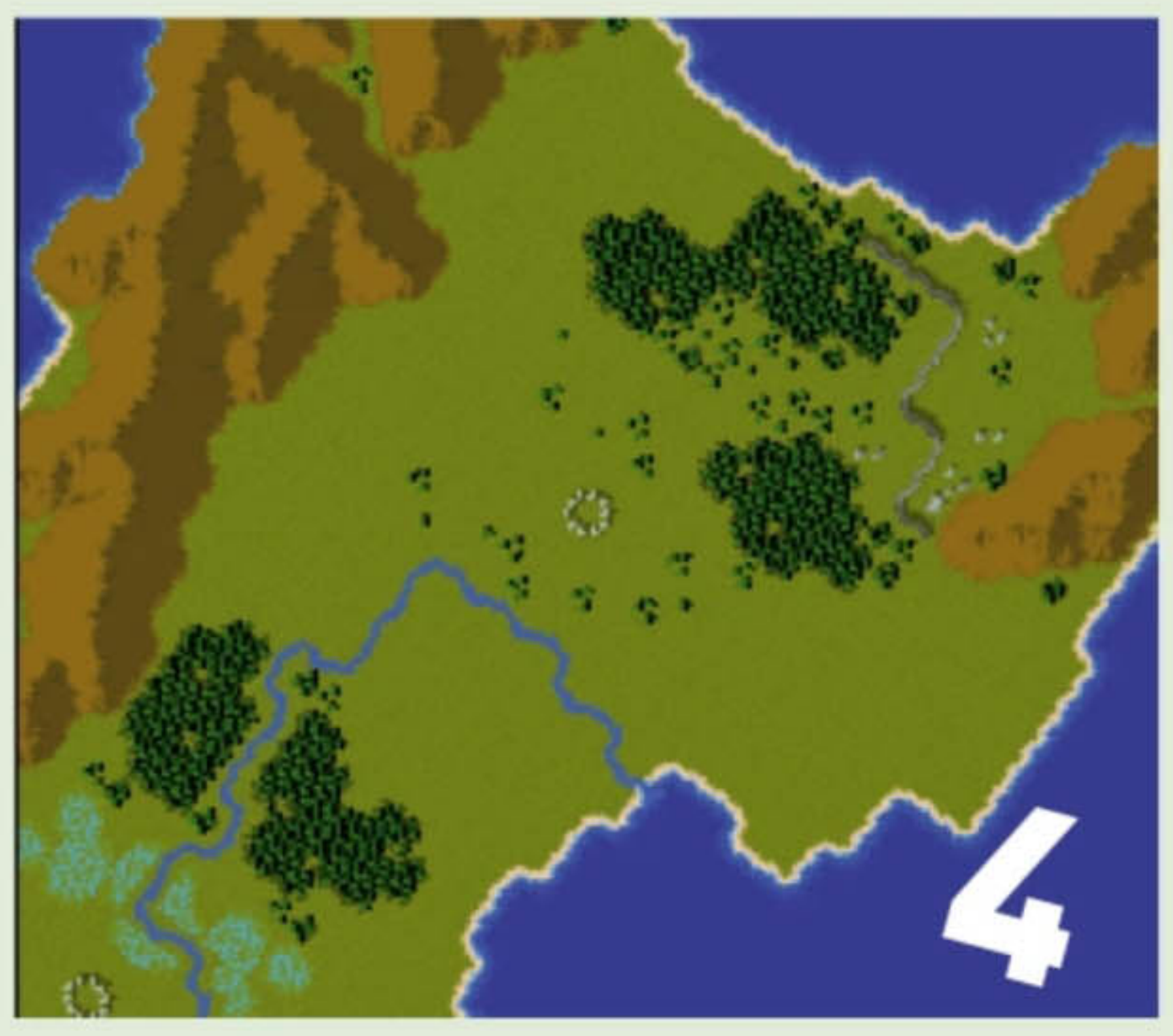
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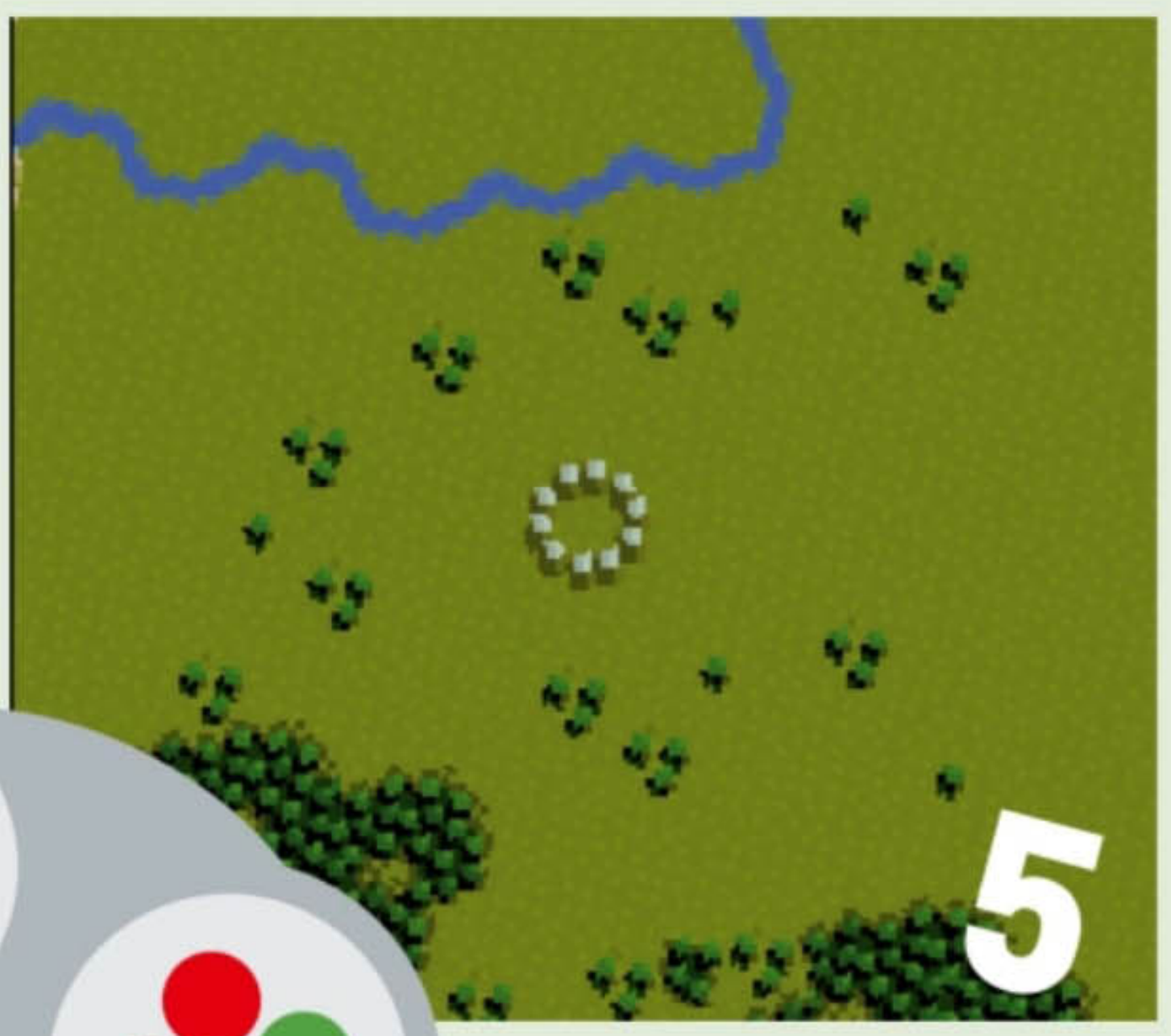
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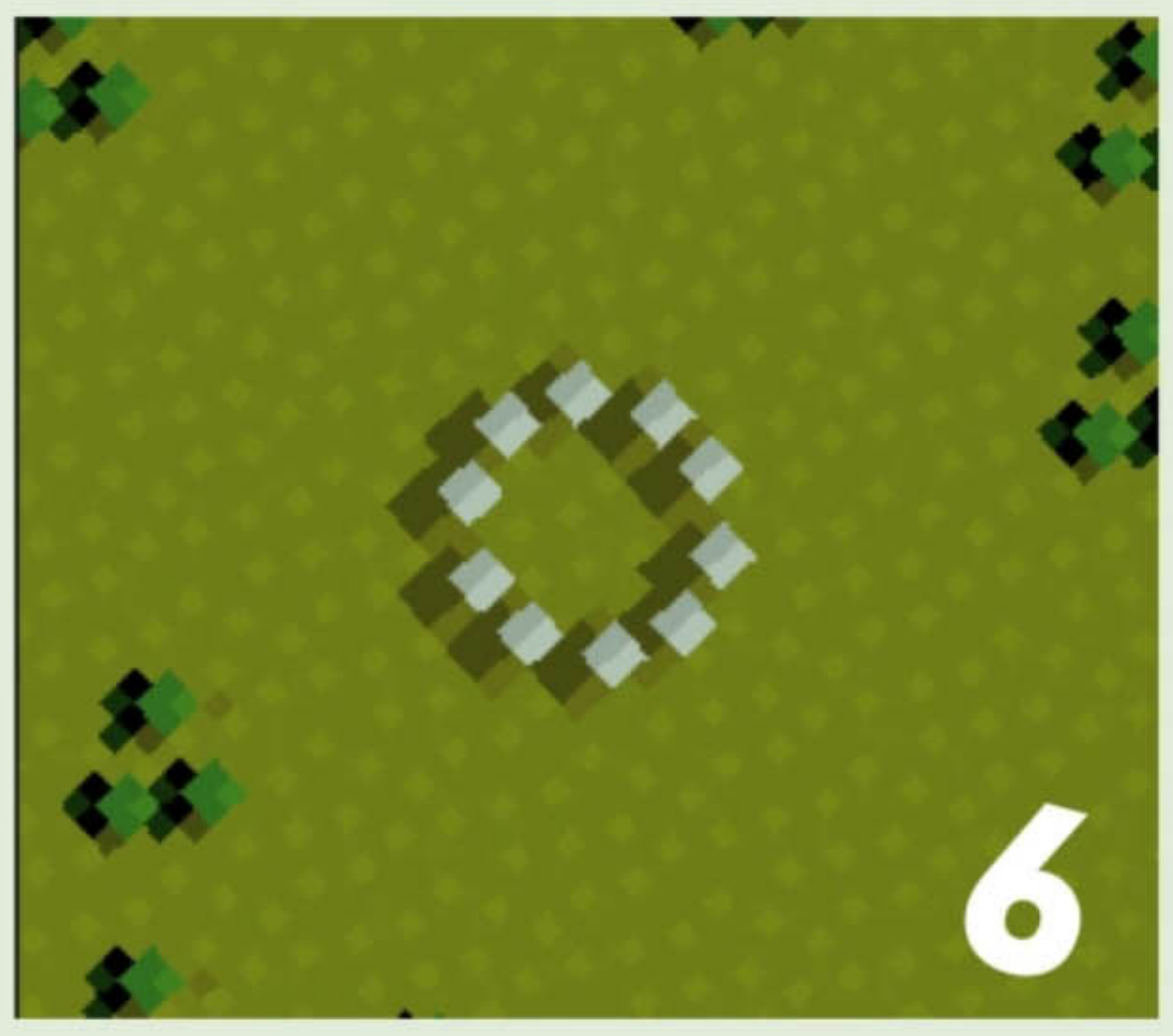
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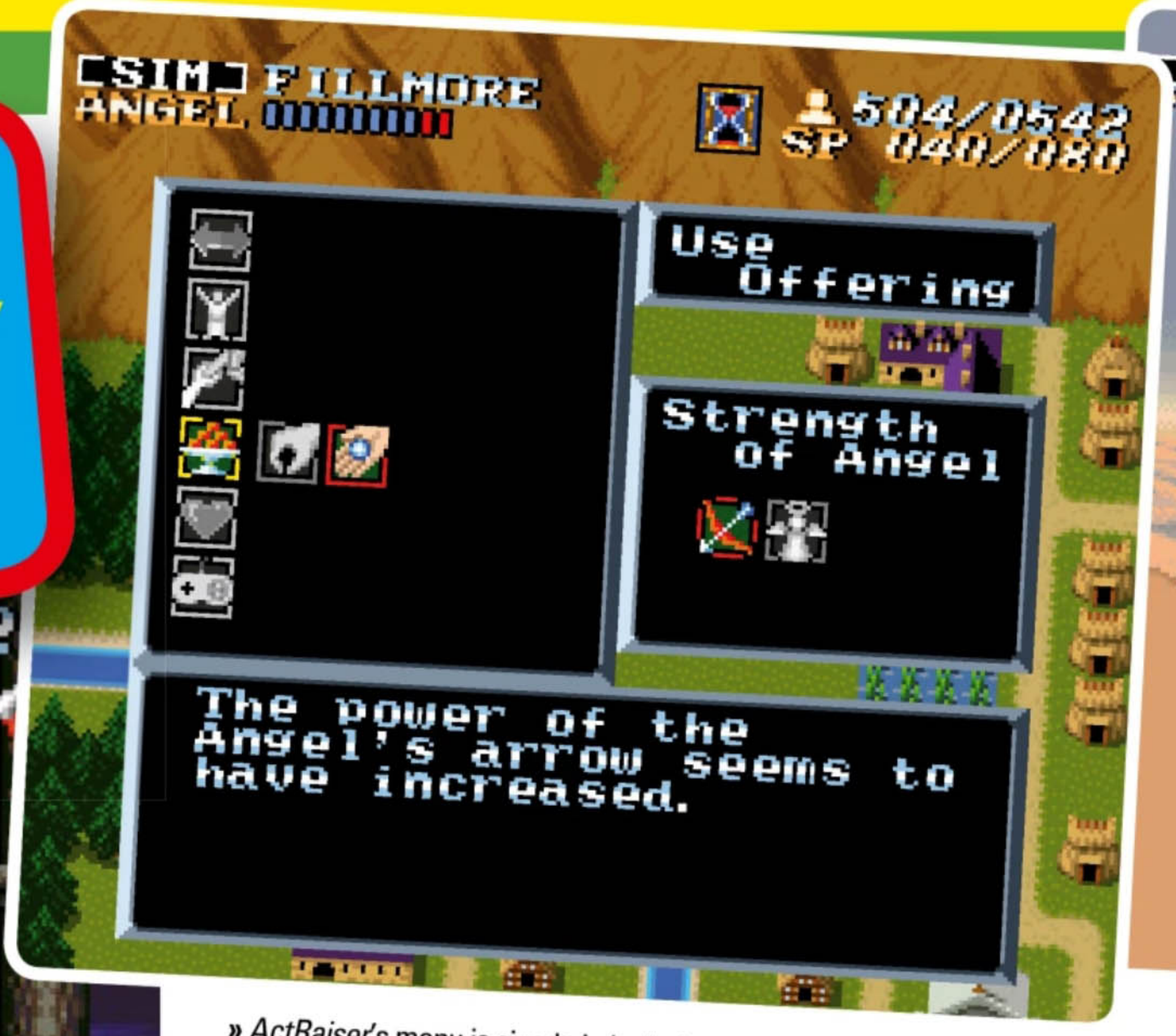
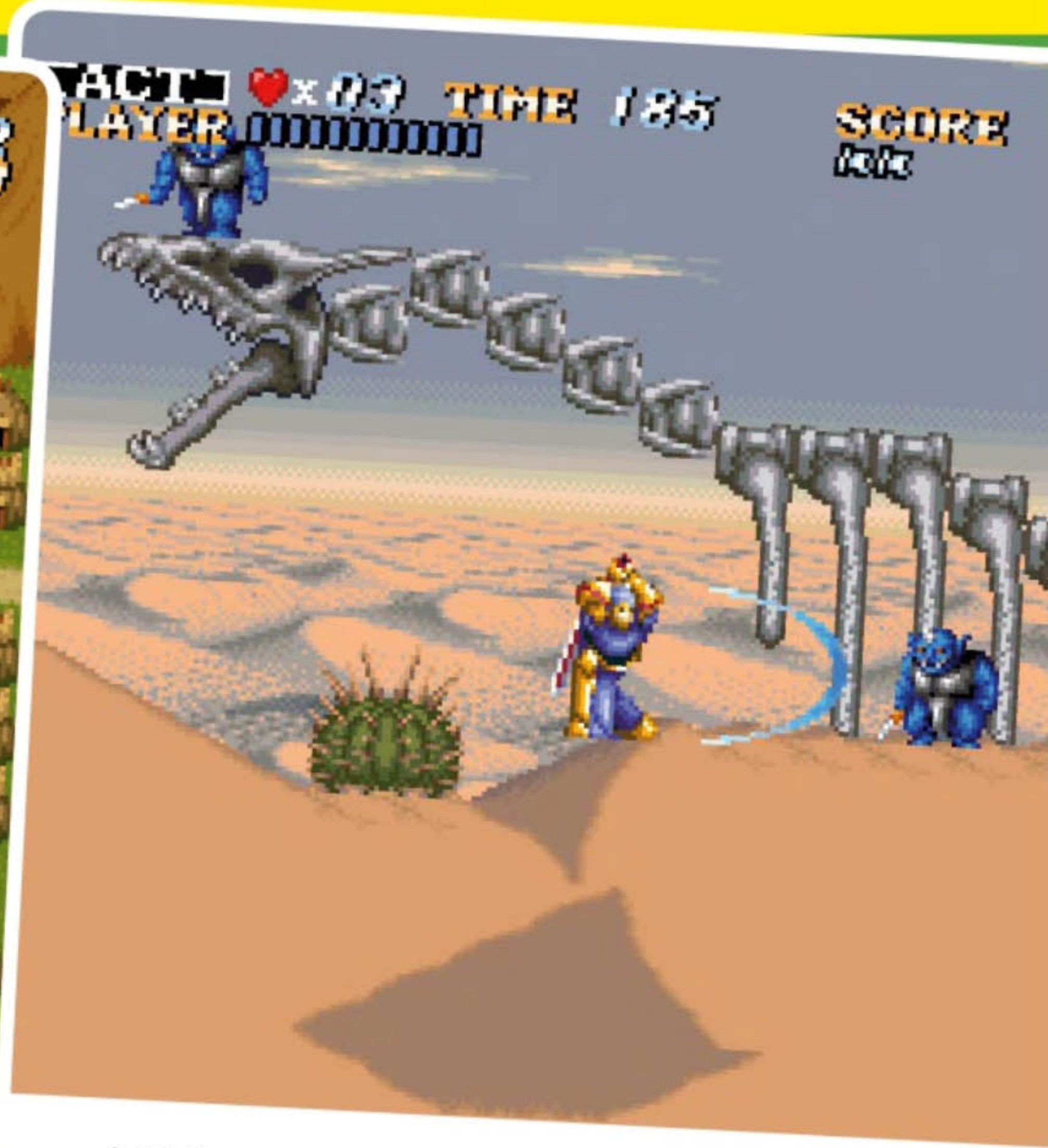


The power of the Angel's arrow seems to have increased.

» *ActRaiser*'s menu is simple in looks but wonderfully intuitive to operate.



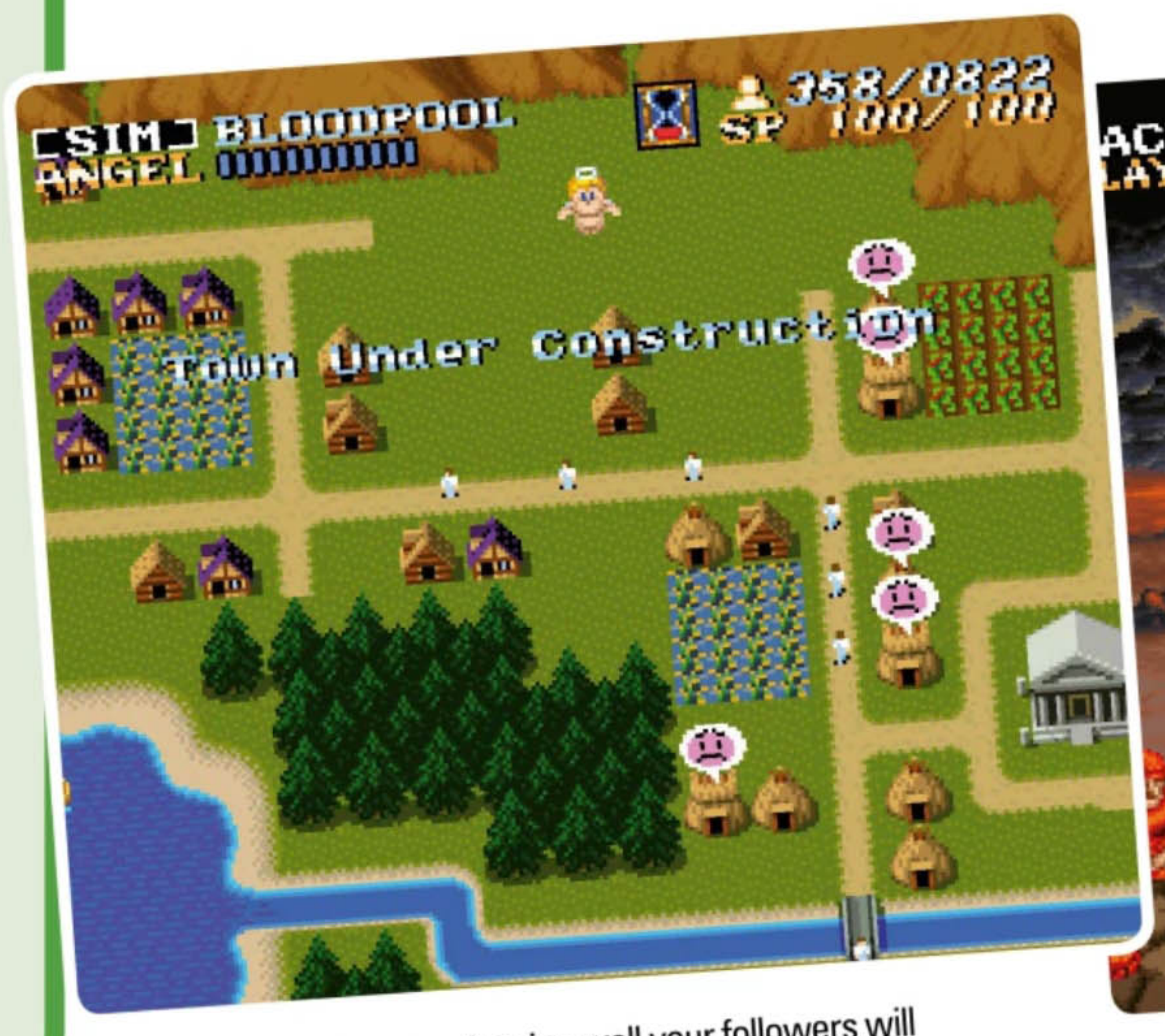
» *ActRaiser*'s many scrolling levels still stand up today and look absolutely beautiful.

> "ACTRAISER STILL RETAINS A REFRESHING UNIQUENESS THAT ENABLES IT TO STAND PROUD AGAINST MANY OF THE SNES'S BETTER-KNOWN TITLES"

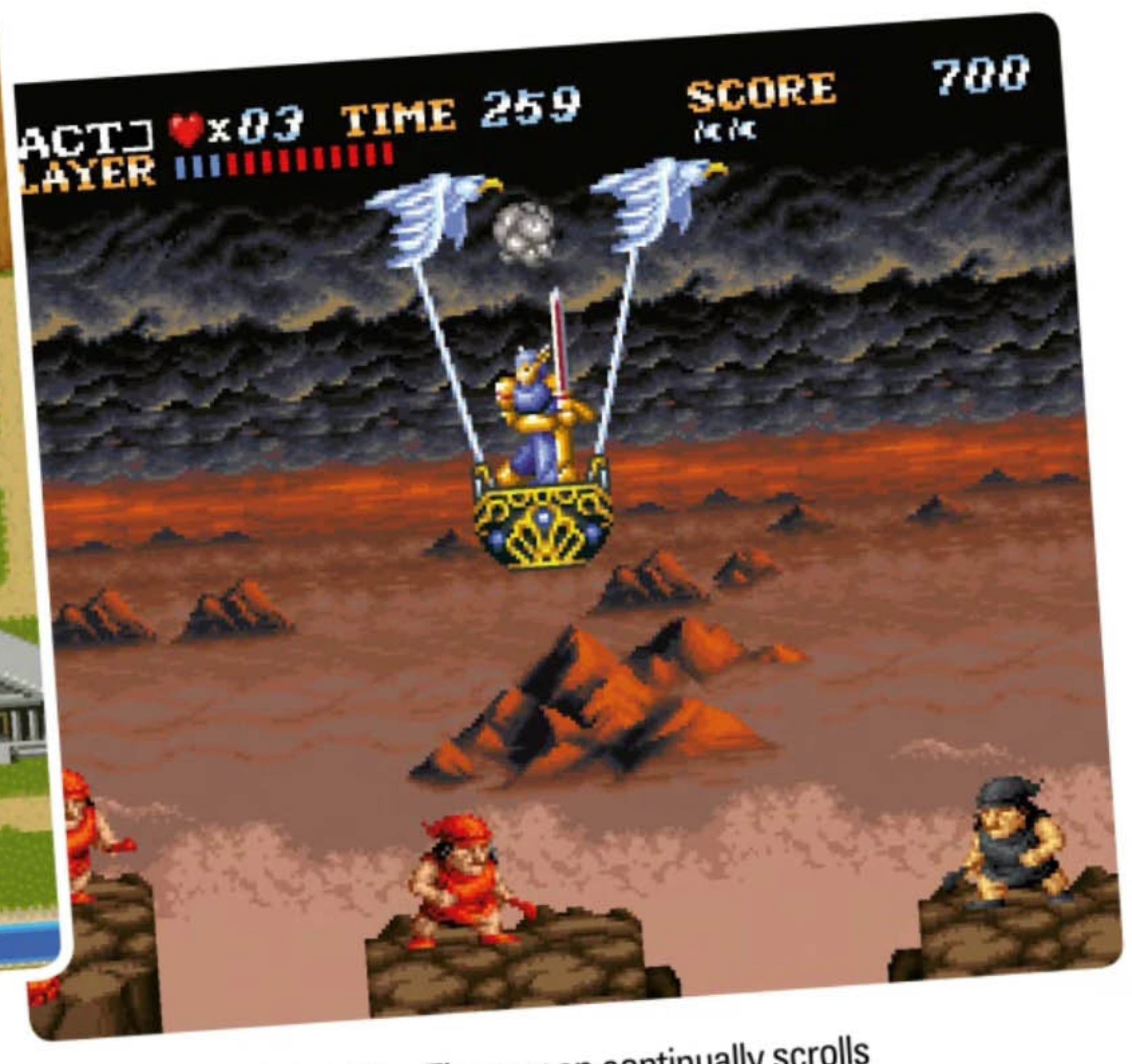
nowadays, but the sprite design featured throughout remains as strong as ever. Cute shambling apes, giant Ent-styled trees, mischievous looking gnomes and vicious lizard men may be little more than cannon-fodder for the impressively armoured knight you control, but that didn't mean that Quintet hadn't showed them any less attention than *ActRaiser*'s mayors. Axe-throwing minotaurs, flame-spewing manticores, viciously fast water dragons, heavily-armoured centaurs, *ActRaiser*'s bosses were very impressive and few will forget the last stage that sees you fighting several of them in quick succession before finally facing Tanra himself.

In truth though, *ActRaiser*'s visuals tell only half the story, as it was its stunning soundtrack that truly drove home the game's cinematic qualities. Wonderfully bombastic in its scale and featuring a stunning range of orchestral tunes, *ActRaiser* is an aural delight and its selection of beautifully varied tunes never fails to impress. From the 20th Century Fox-styled opening that accompanies the swirling title screen, to the heartrending ending (all flutes and pipes), *ActRaiser*'s music is as integral to the game as its actual gameplay and it's impossible to think of having one without the other. Of course, when you discover that *ActRaiser*'s rousing score is by Yuzo Koshiro, the legendary musician behind the likes of *Shenmue*, *Revenge Of Shinobi* and the excellent *Streets Of Rage* trilogy, everything begins to make perfect sense.

So with its stirring music, beautiful visuals and cleverly juxtaposed genres *ActRaiser* sounds very nearly perfect, and it very nearly is. The only small downside to this beautifully crafted creation is that it's a little too easy, although in another way that can actually be seen as a bonus, as it will enable you to uncover *ActRaiser*'s secrets over one long weekend. With today's RPGs being bogged down with lengthy cutscenes and monotonous levelling up, finding a game like *ActRaiser* that can be completed so quickly is truly refreshing. The relative speed with which you can play through *ActRaiser* must be levelled at its six sim sections, as they are extremely simplistic in their execution and require you to do little more than level the surrounding countryside with a selection of different powers (lightning, rain, or later earthquakes) while laying the ground work for your followers to build on and shoot any nearby monsters. While your subjects continually pester you with requests, most



» When things aren't going well your followers will soon give you a sign.



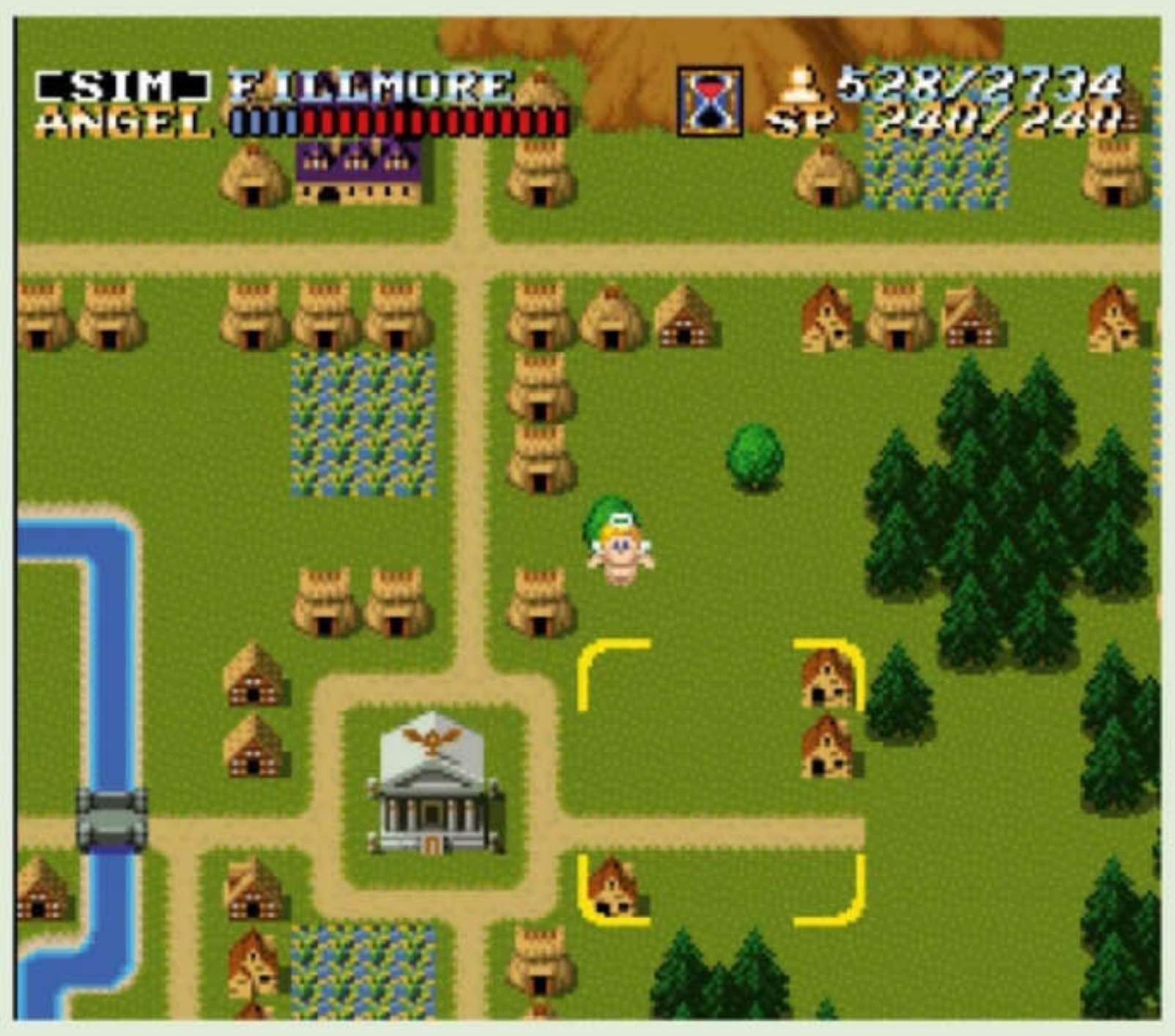
» Now this is tricky. The screen continually scrolls forward, so you really need to be on your guard.

LOCATION, LOCATION

ActRaiser's environments are many and varied…

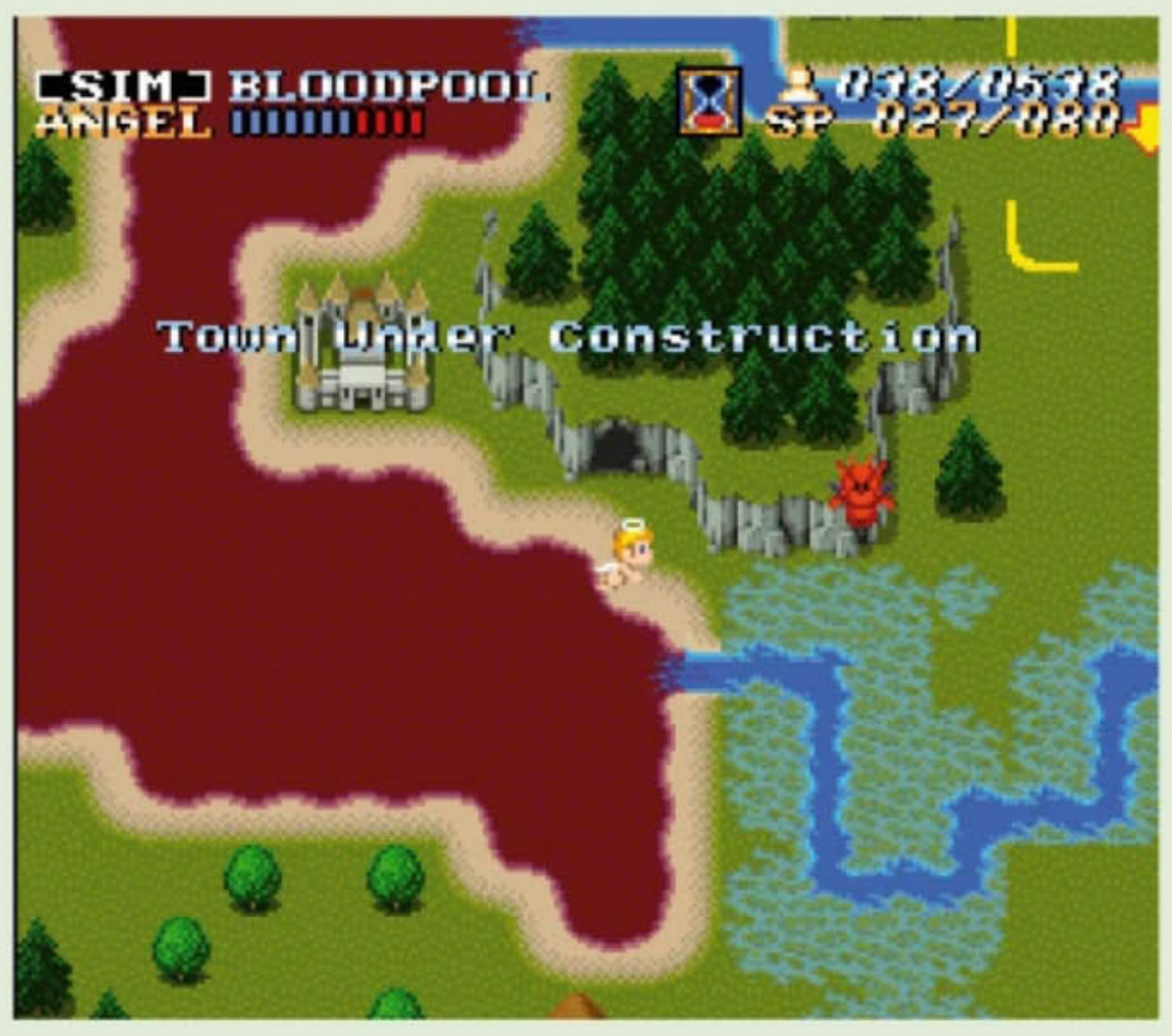
FILLMORE

Your quest begins in the delightful land of Fillmore. While most of its countryside consists of rolling pastures there are a fair few trees that make building roads difficult. A quick blast of lightning soon solves this particular problem though.


[SIM] FILLMORE
ANGEL
528/2734
SP 240/240

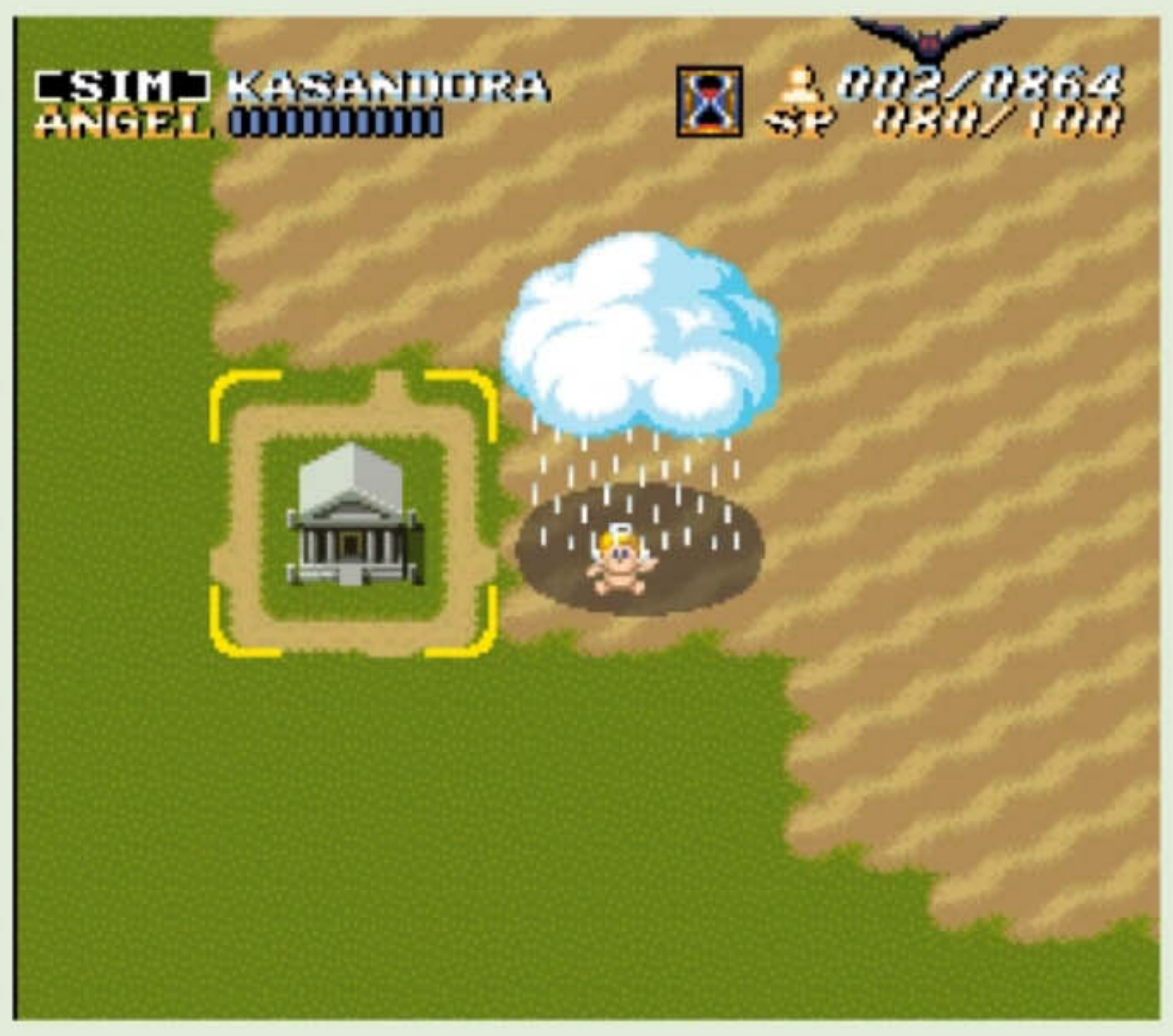
BLOODPOOL

The swamp infested Bloodpool gets its name from the deep red of its largest lake. You discover that the large expanse of water is being poisoned by monsters, but how are you going to stop them and restore the lake to its former glory?


[SIM] BLOODPOOL
ANGEL
038/0538
SP 027/080
Town Under Construction

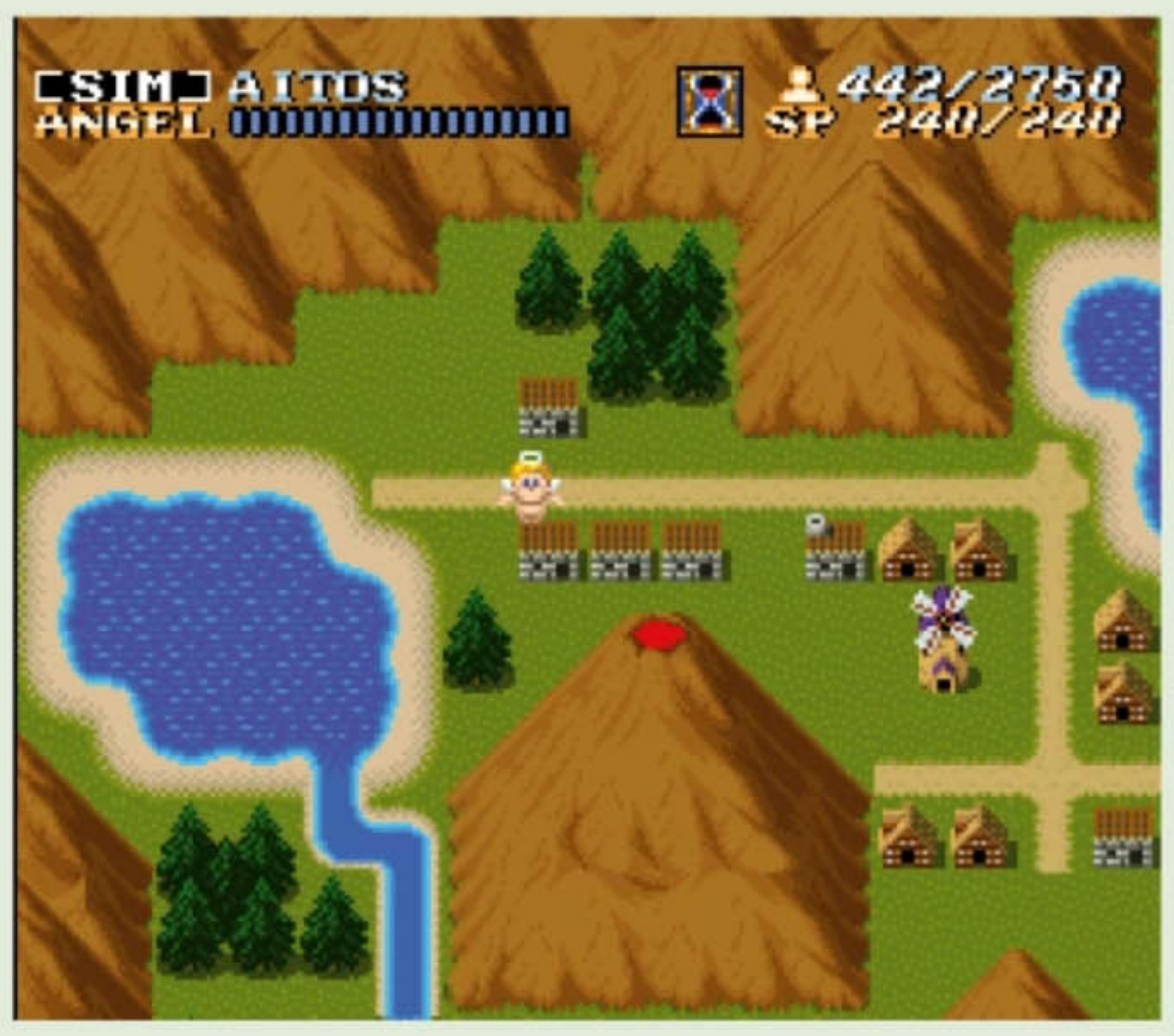
KASANDORA

Living in Kasandora appears impossible as it's filled with a huge expanse of inhospitable desert. Fortunately, you can summon up large quantities of rain to flush most of it away, meaning that your followers can soon rebuild new homes.


[SIM] KASANDORA
ANGEL
002/0864
SP 080/100

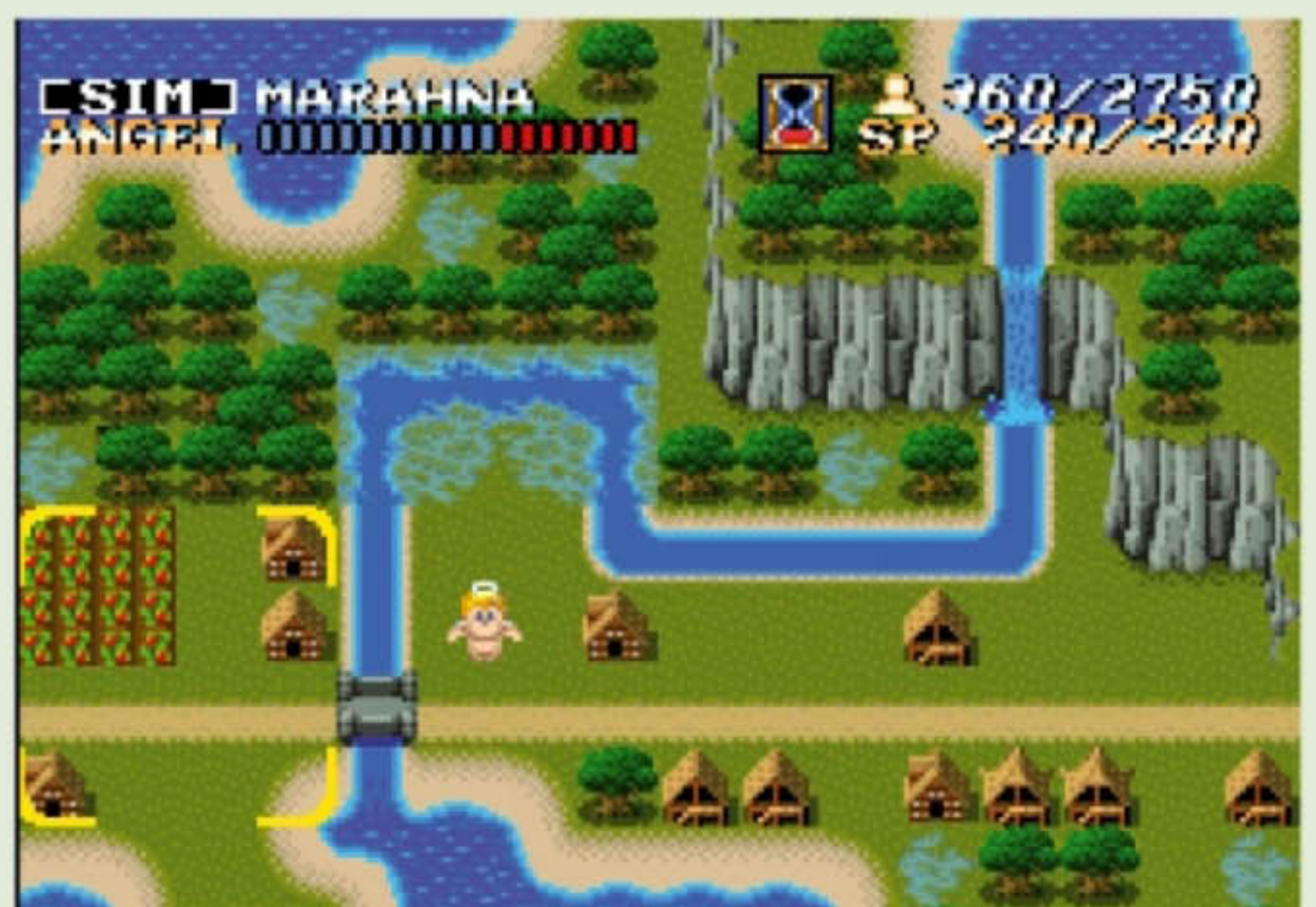
AITOS

The region of Aitos is similar to Kasandora in that it requires a lot of effort to enable your followers to live there. Use gusts of wind to keep their windmills turning and they will reward you with the wool they gather from the region's sheep.


[SIM] AITOS
ANGEL
442/2750
SP 240/240

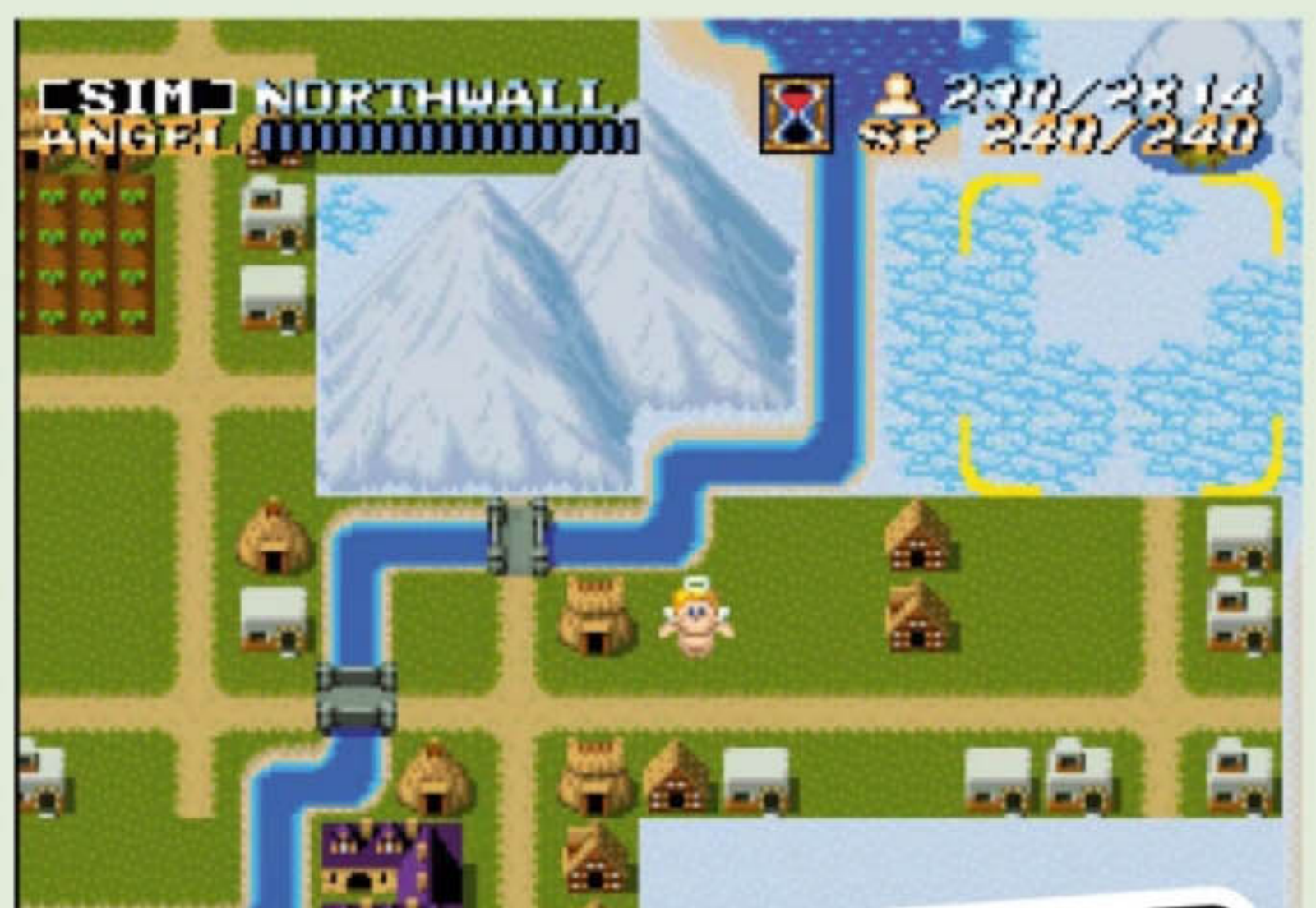
MARAHNA

A humid jungle that requires plenty of lightning blasts to destroy the island's many trees. You'll also be required to create an earthquake later in the game, so make sure you don't build too many homes near the targeted area…


[SIM] MARAHNA
ANGEL
360/2750
SP 240/240

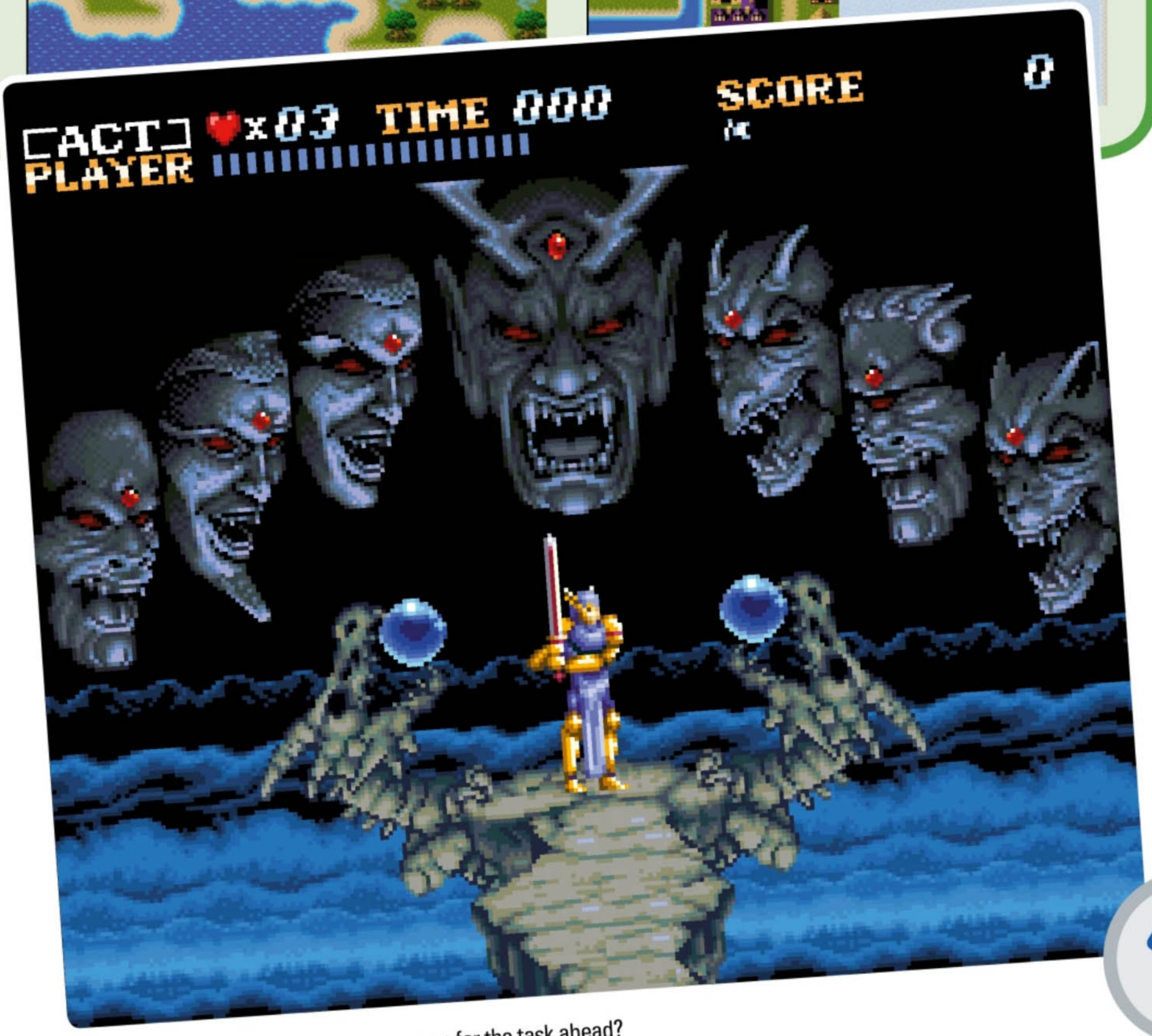
NORTHWALL

The biggest problem you'll have at Northwall is that it's too cold for many of your villagers to work in. Surely one of your other countries has a way of keeping them warm… It also features one of the hardest stages in the game.


[SIM] NORTHWALL
ANGEL
230/2814
SP 240/240

tasks require you to do little more than travel to an adjacent town and pick up an item that your current villagers are unable to create. Of course, with *ActRaiser* straddling two vastly different genres, neither of them were going to be as complex as a game that focused on a single playing style, so Quintet's linear approach can be somewhat justified. It also means that you can quickly race through the town building sections and return to the side-scrolling hack-fests – it should come as no surprise to learn that Quintet includes a "Professional Mode" that cuts out the sim building entirely and simply allows you to play all 12 of *ActRaiser*'s glorious levels.

Even after so many years *ActRaiser* retains a refreshing uniqueness that enables it to stand proud against many of the SNES's better-known titles. The fact that many of you are unlikely to have played it the first time around should help make its discovery all the sweeter.


[ACT]
x03
TIME 000
SCORE
0
PLAYER

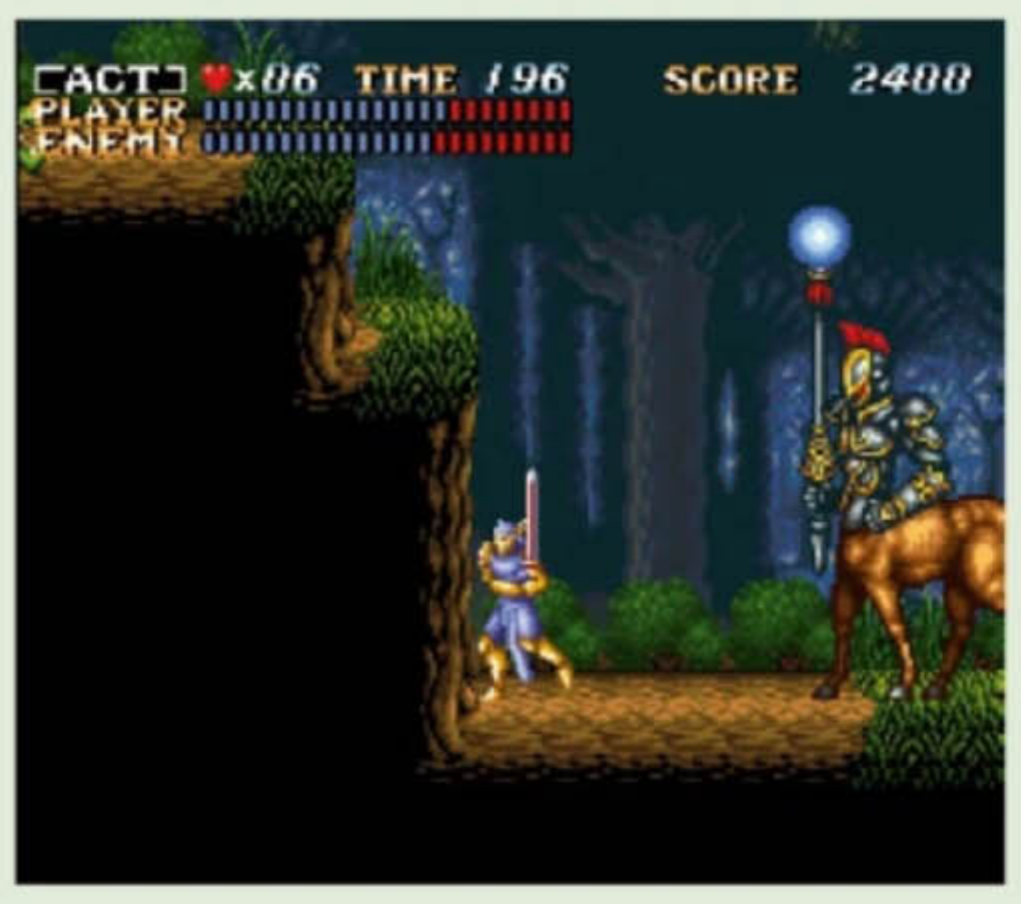
» The final showdown, but are you up for the task ahead?

BEASTLY BOSSES

Just a few of *ActRaiser*'s bosses and how to defeat them

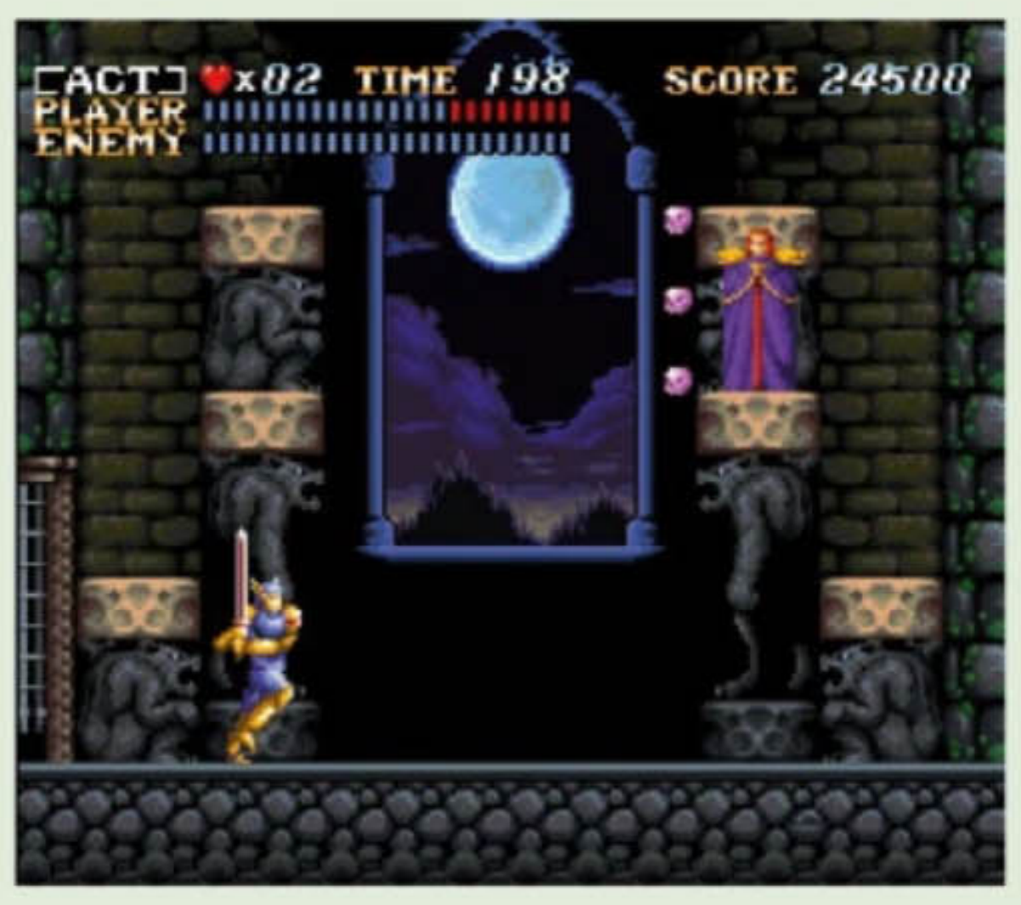
CENTAUR KNIGHT

The first boss may be huge but he's easy to kill. Duck under his attack and then get in a quick counter hit. When he fires his lightning attack, run to the far right of the screen.


[ACT]
x06
TIME 196
SCORE 2400
PLAYER
ENEMY

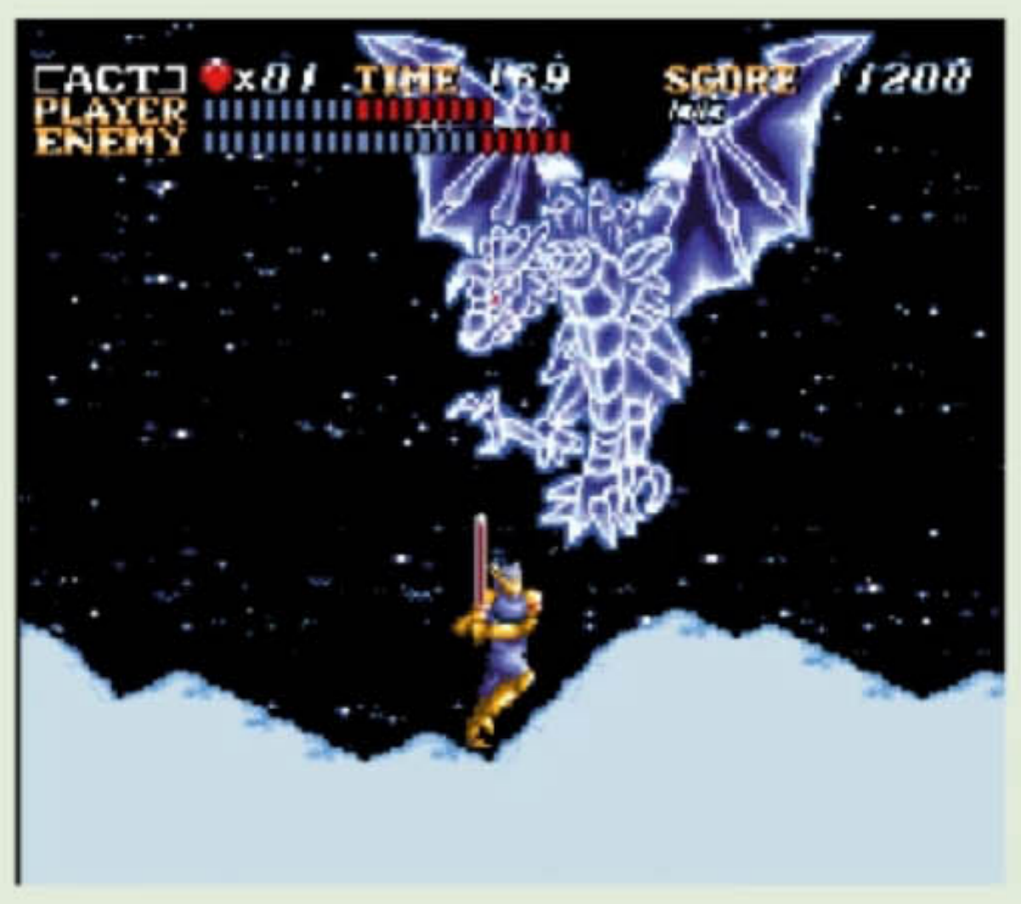
WIZARD

Stay at a distance to avoid his fire. When he lands on the bottom right, run over to score four hits on him. He'll turn into a werewolf, but just constantly hit him and he'll keel over.


[ACT]
x02
TIME 198
SCORE 24500
PLAYER
ENEMY

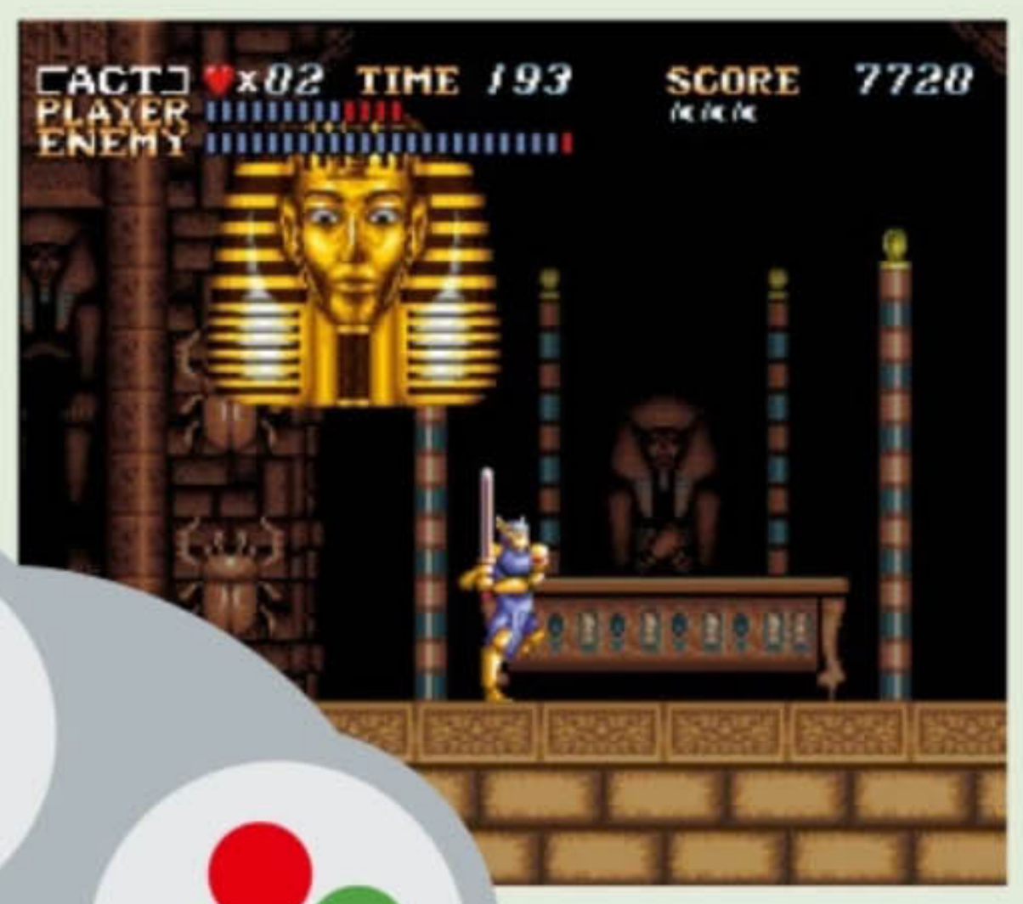
ICE WYVERN

Wait for him to fire ice at you then run away from him. Eventually he'll come to a stop, so manoeuvre behind him to get in a few solid strikes. Rinse, lather, and repeat…


[ACT]
PLAYER
ENEMY

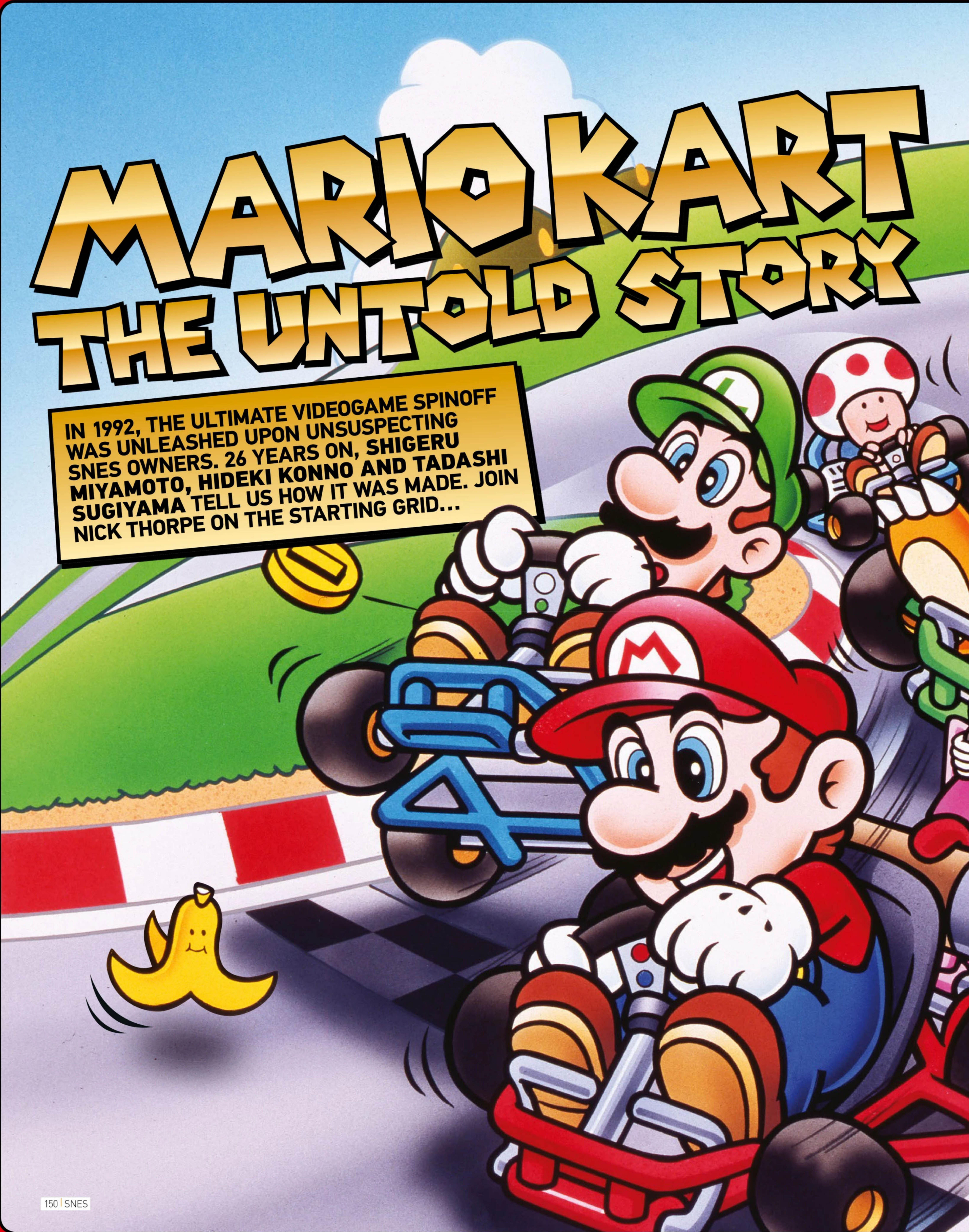
GOLDEN PHARAOH

His eyes will indicate when he drops down, so stay out of his way. Once he's landed you can hit him and all you have to do is jump over the laser he fires and repeat the process.


[ACT]
x02
TIME 193
SCORE 7720
PLAYER
ENEMY

MARIO KART THE UNTOLD STORY

IN 1992, THE ULTIMATE VIDEOGAME SPINOFF WAS UNLEASHED UPON UNSUSPECTING SNES OWNERS. 26 YEARS ON, SHIGERU MIYAMOTO, HIDEKI KONNO AND TADASHI SUGIYAMA TELL US HOW IT WAS MADE. JOIN NICK THORPE ON THE STARTING GRID…



KARTING KINGS

The Nintendo all-stars that we spoke to about Super Mario Kart

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO
PRODUCER,
SUPER MARIO KART

HIDEKI KONNO
DIRECTOR,
SUPER MARIO KART

TADASHI SUGIYAMA
DIRECTOR,
SUPER MARIO KART

MARIO KART

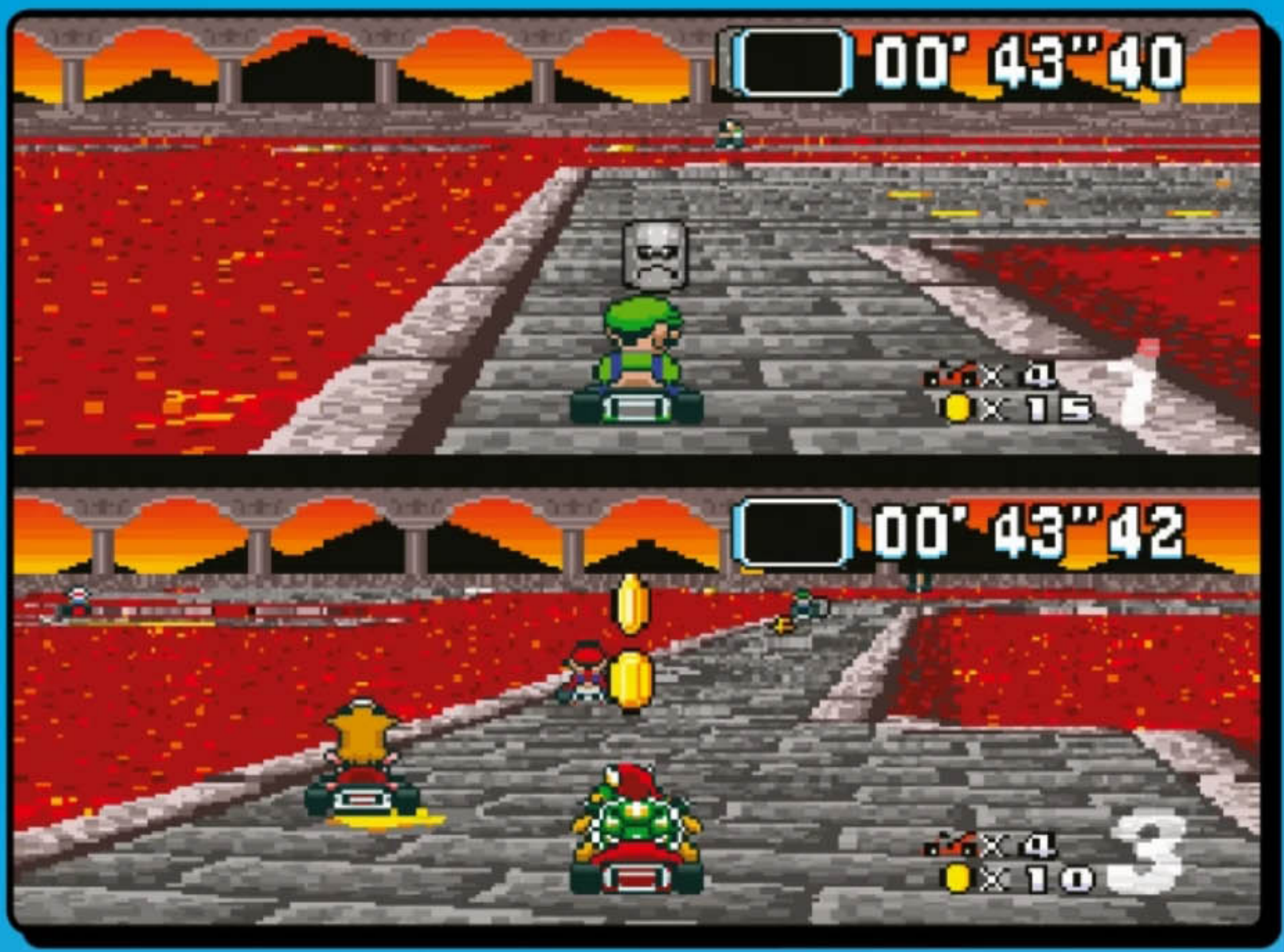
Nintendo
SUPER MARIO KART
Where racing becomes an adventure!
SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
PAL VERSION
Nintendo
スーパーファミコン
SUPER MARIO KART
スーパーマリオカート
SHVC-MK

» The Super Famcom and SNES art were marginally different from each other.

Videogame spinoffs are a tricky thing to get right. Often, it seems like someone in marketing has asked the question, "Why don't we take [Property X] and make a [Genre Y] game out of it?" and then left the developers to solve the problem. Sometimes, the idea is sound but hampered by trying to adhere too closely to the original game's mechanics. On other occasions, the spirit of the original property is lost in the transition to a new genre, or the developer has wandered too far from what it does best and delivered a sub-par product. But the world's most beloved spinoff series didn't have any of these problems, because Nintendo EAD never started off with the goal of making *Super Mario Kart*.

> "I had absolutely no objections with enemy characters racing against rivals"
>
> Shigeru Miyamoto

"Our original plan didn't include Mario or karts. The game's roots lie in one of the launch titles for the SNES: *F-Zero*," director Hideki Konno and graphics artist Tadashi Sugiyama confirm to us. The futuristic racing game was a key technical showcase for the SNES, displaying the scaling and rotation capabilities of the console's custom graphics hardware – a feature commonly known as Mode 7. It was an influential and popular game, but one that lacked multiplayer. "The game was designed for single-player gameplay because of our focus on getting across the sense of speed and the size of the courses," explain Konno and Sugiyama. "It was a prototype for a multiplayer version of *F-Zero* that ended up being the starting point for *Super Mario Kart*, and from there we went through a period of trial and error to find what worked."



» Hazards on the track aren't limited to those provided by other racers, as the Thwomp here proves.

"You could say that Mario was added to the racing game as a result of this trial and error," Konno and Sugiyama continue. "*F-Zero* displays the layer for the course over an area of 100 screens in order to create a feeling of speed and scale. However, because of hardware limitations, splitting the screen for multiplayer required the courses be displayed within an area no more than four TV screens wide by four screens high, i.e. 16 screens." Getting multiplayer working was possible, albeit with some sacrifice – and, as it turns out, losing a huge chunk of the map was a sacrifice too far. "We tried creating an *F-Zero*-style circuit within that limitation, but found it too difficult to race in with an F1-type vehicle, making it impossible to create a course that could give you a feeling of speed."

Given that high speeds were a key characteristic of *F-Zero*, it was clear that the game's theme needed to change. "In a last-ditch attempt, we came up with what we felt was our only choice: kart racing. Karts were a great fit for these compact courses," Konno and Sugiyama recall. The slower pace of the game certainly suited the smaller courses, although the development team would have to be inventive with their 1024x1024 pixel design space. "However, with the drivers wearing helmets and racing suits, they all

STARTING GRID

Your guide to the eight racers found in Super Mario Kart

MARIO

SPECIAL ITEM: RIVAL:

ACCELERATION ★★☆☆
TOP SPEED ★★★☆
WEIGHT ★★☆☆
HANDLING ★★☆☆

PEACH

SPECIAL ITEM: RIVAL:

ACCELERATION ★★★★
TOP SPEED ★★☆☆
WEIGHT ★★☆☆
HANDLING ★☆☆☆

LUIGI

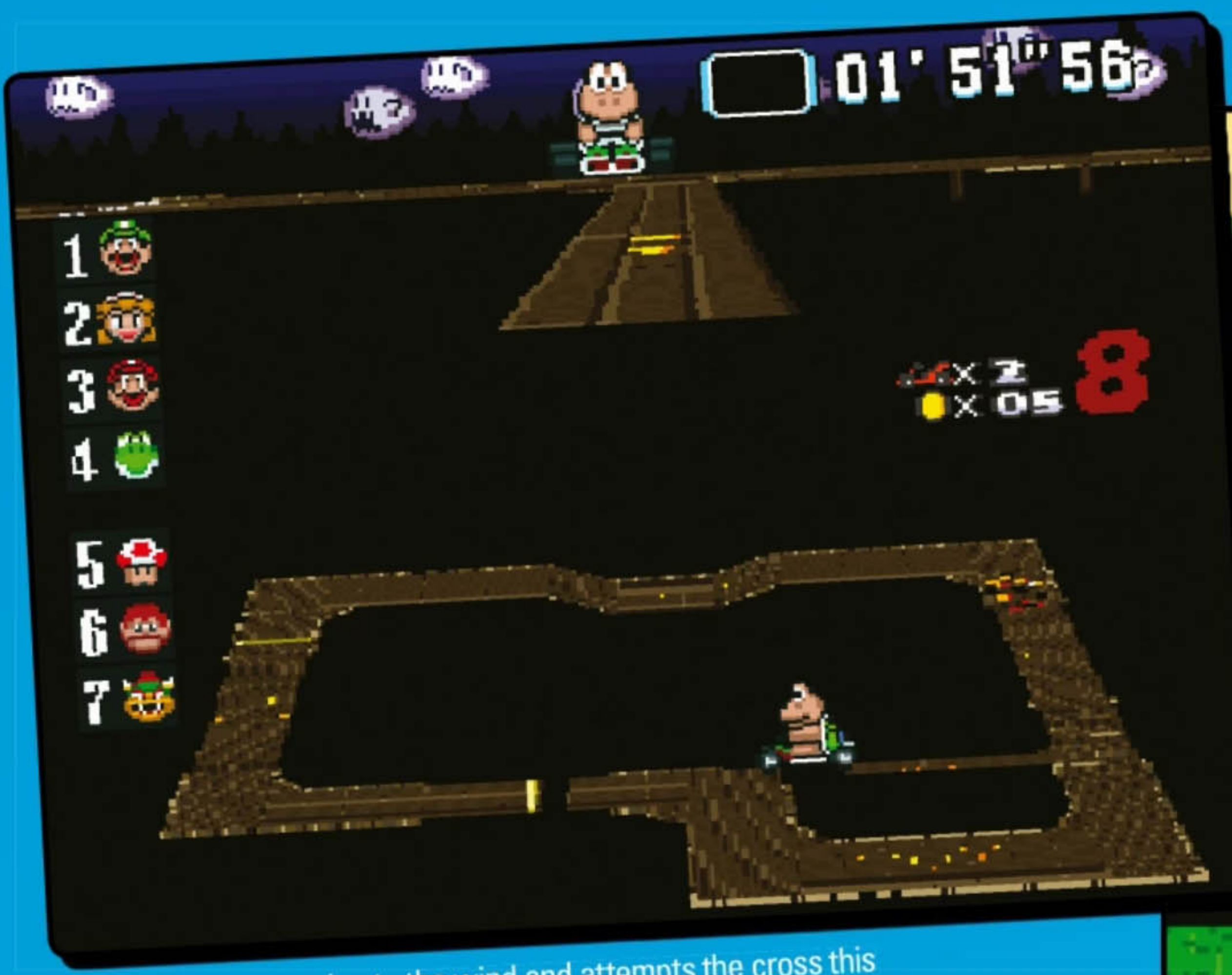
SPECIAL ITEM: RIVAL:

ACCELERATION ★★☆☆
TOP SPEED ★★★☆
WEIGHT ★★☆☆
HANDLING ★★☆☆

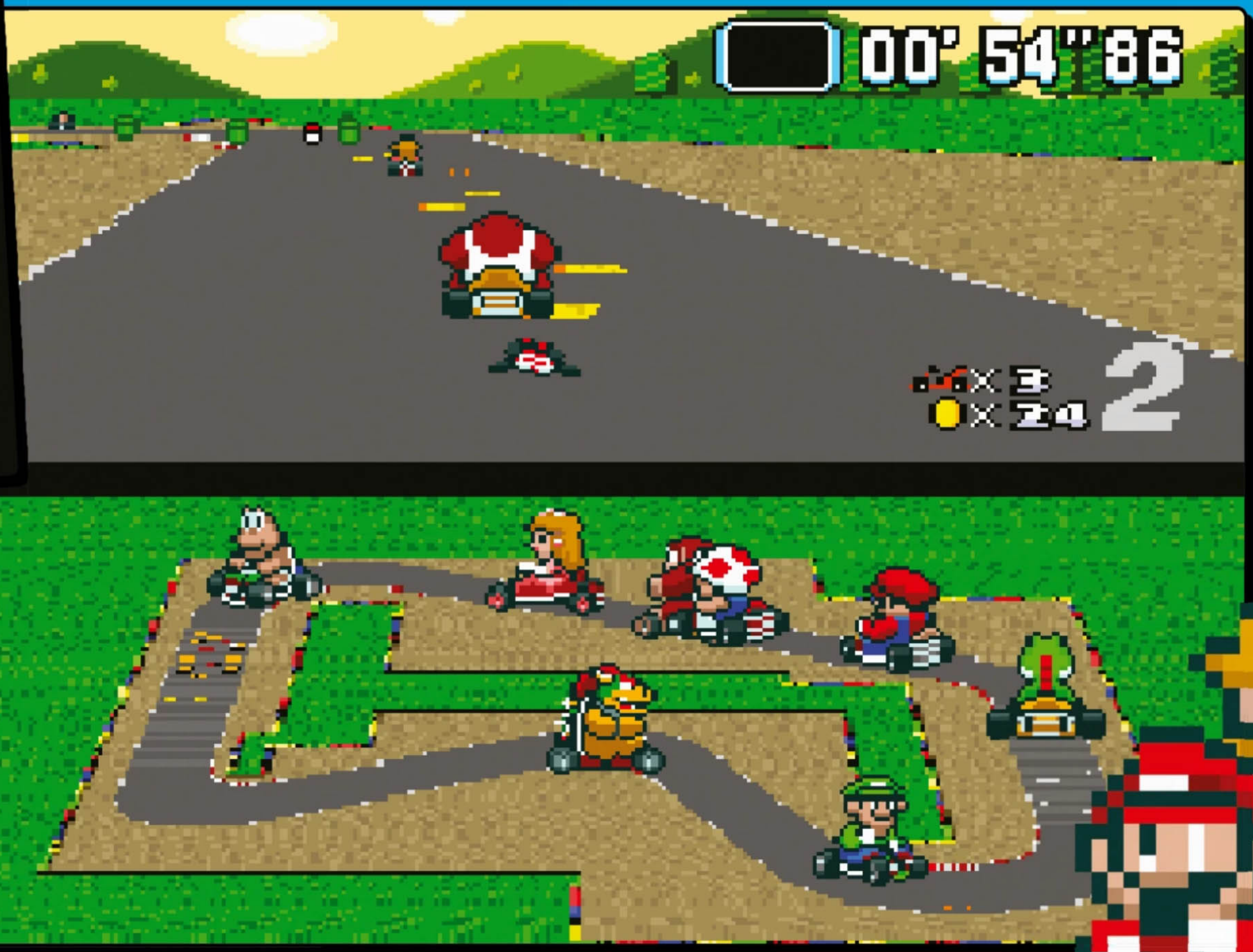
TOAD

SPECIAL ITEM: RIVAL:

ACCELERATION ★★★☆
TOP SPEED ★☆☆☆
WEIGHT ★☆☆☆
HANDLING ★★★☆



» Koopa throws caution to the wind and attempts the cross this precarious shortcut.



» Racers can be squashed flat if they've been shrunk, just like poor Toad here.

looked the same from behind and lacked individuality. It's hard to tell who is who, so we ran into another problem there."

The resolution to this problem proved surprisingly simple, and provided the game with some serious star power to rely upon. "We thought about what kind of character would be instantly recognisable when seen from behind, and decided to try Mario. Mario certainly is a recognisable character, even from behind, and it was instantly clear that it's him," explain Konno and Sugiyama. "For the other racers, we chose more characters from the *Mario* franchise who could also be clearly recognised from behind. This was the first step in the creation of *Super Mario Kart*. Without this hardware limitation we might have ended up with a different racing game."

Eight characters were chosen as racers. Mario and Luigi were obvious choices, as were Princess Peach, Toad and Yoshi. However, the appearance of the antagonistic characters Donkey Kong Jr., Koopa Trooper and Bowser in a friendly competitive setting was a tad unexpected. We had to ask if there was ever a concern about that."Well the genre of the games are different and all the characters from the *Mario* series are essentially competing individually in the races, so I didn't find it strange, even if they are normally opponents," says Konno. "Here they are more like friendly rivals." Mario's character designer Shigeru Miyamoto, who served as producer on *Super Mario Kart*, elaborates on this: "The setting for *Mario* is in any case like a comic, where in each story the characters appear in different roles. Mario appearing in lots of different kinds of games is also in line with comic tradition. With this in mind, I had absolutely no objections with enemy characters racing against rivals or characters that you can control yourself." Sugiyama also chimes in on this point to add his take: "Also, despite being villains, as you say, it's still hard to actually hate these characters and I think it was a good point that users could happily use any of the characters."

With the characters established, the courses they were to race on had to be created within the tight space restrictions. "Due to the hardware limitations at the time, we couldn't place actual 3D objects," says Sugiyama. "So we divided the ground into different types: asphalt, dirt, wood, stone, and water and created differences between them by changing the values for their resistance." A great deal of variance was achieved using this approach – nobody would mistake Vanilla Lake's ice for the mud of Choco Island, for example. "For the backgrounds we picked things that fit with the *Mario* setting," he continues. "The course difficulties were adjusted as we played them, and things like the breakable barriers were added later to make the game more thrilling."

Had Nintendo been content to put out a simple two-player racing game featuring *Mario* characters ▶

BOWSER

SPECIAL ITEM: RIVAL:

ACCELERATION ★☆☆☆
TOP SPEED ★★★★
WEIGHT ★★★☆
HANDLING ★★☆☆

YOSHI

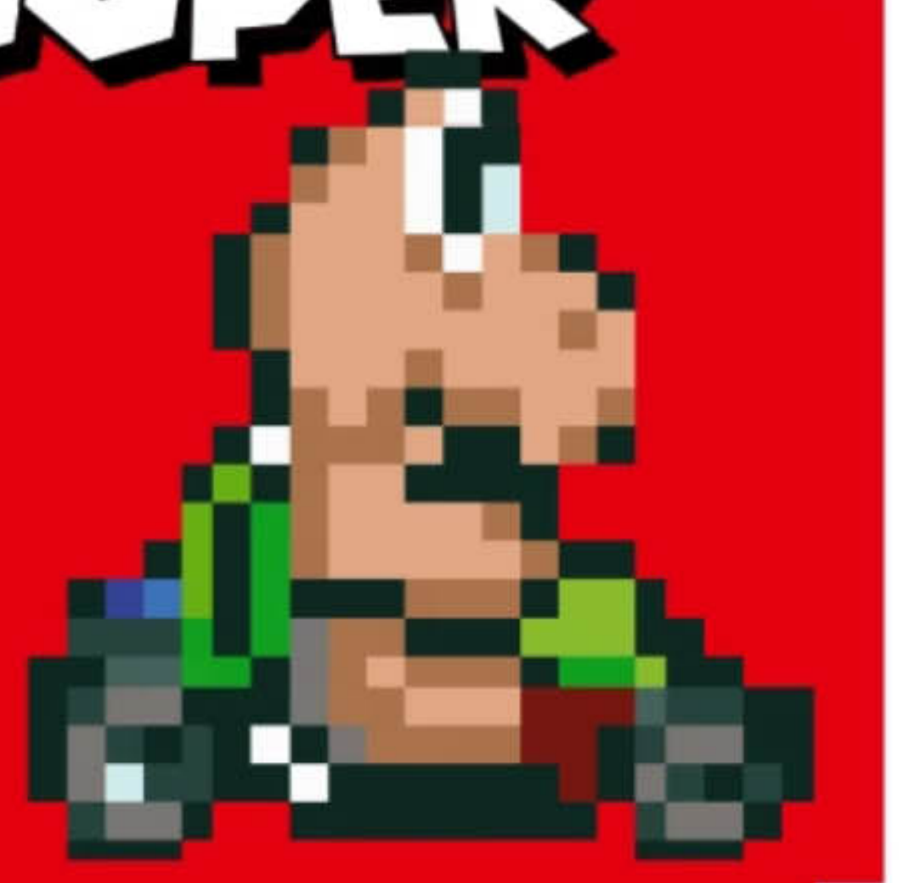
SPECIAL ITEM: RIVAL:

ACCELERATION ★★★★
TOP SPEED ★★☆☆
WEIGHT ★★☆☆
HANDLING ★☆☆☆

KOOPA TROOPER

SPECIAL ITEM: RIVAL:

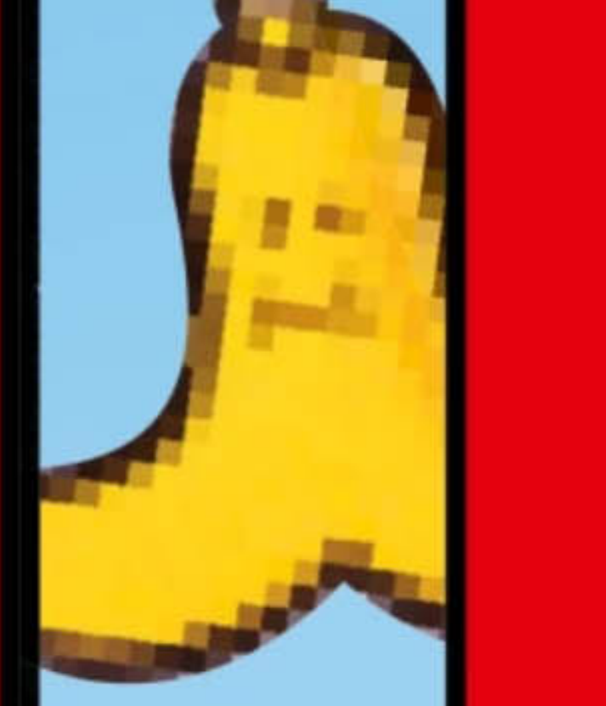
ACCELERATION ★★★☆
TOP SPEED ★☆☆☆
WEIGHT ★☆☆☆
HANDLING ★★★☆



DONKEY KONG JR.

SPECIAL ITEM: RIVAL:

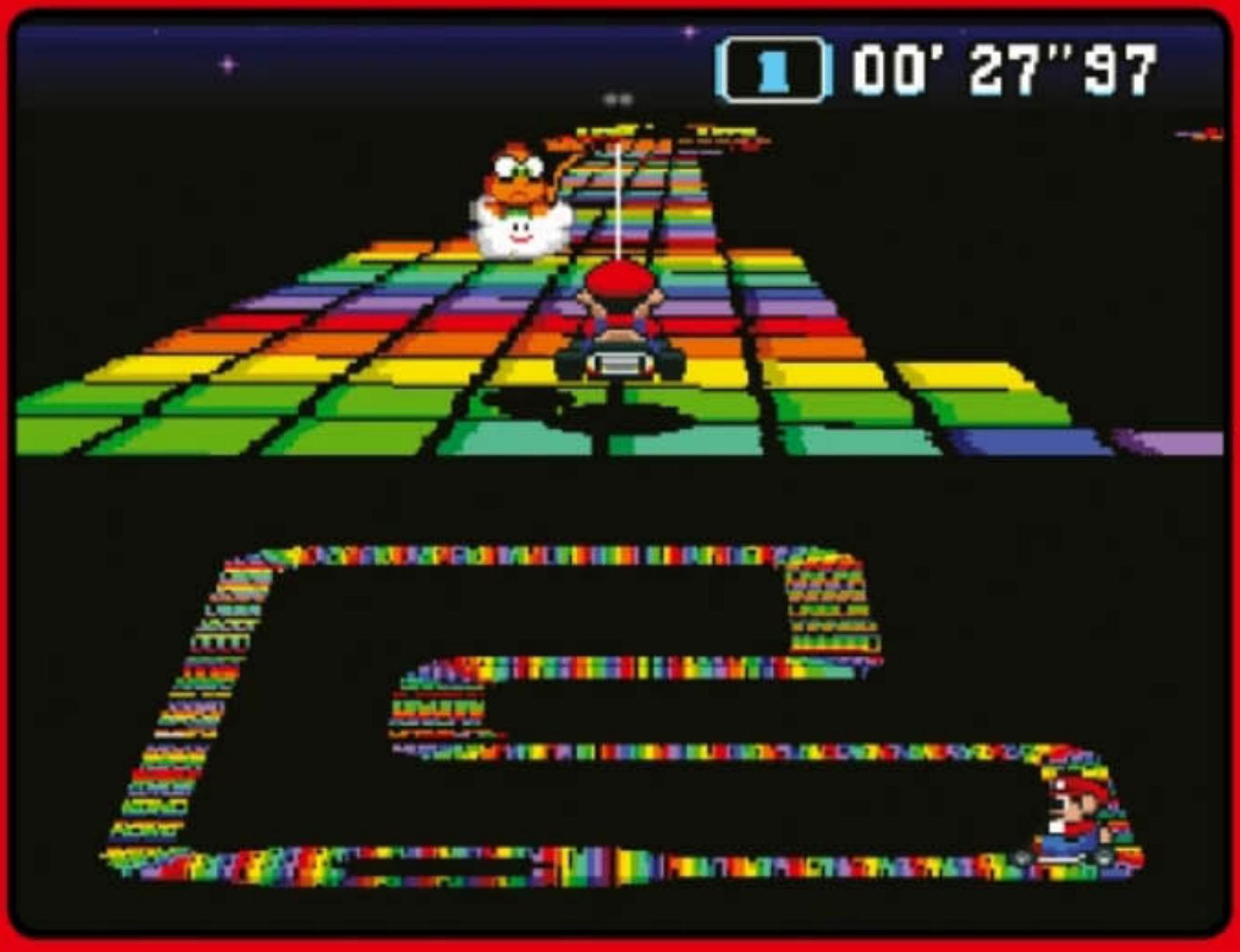
ACCELERATION ★☆☆☆
TOP SPEED ★★★★
WEIGHT ★★★☆
HANDLING ★★☆☆



MARIO KART

TEAM PICKS

Everyone's got a favourite track in Super Mario Kart – here are the ones we particularly like…

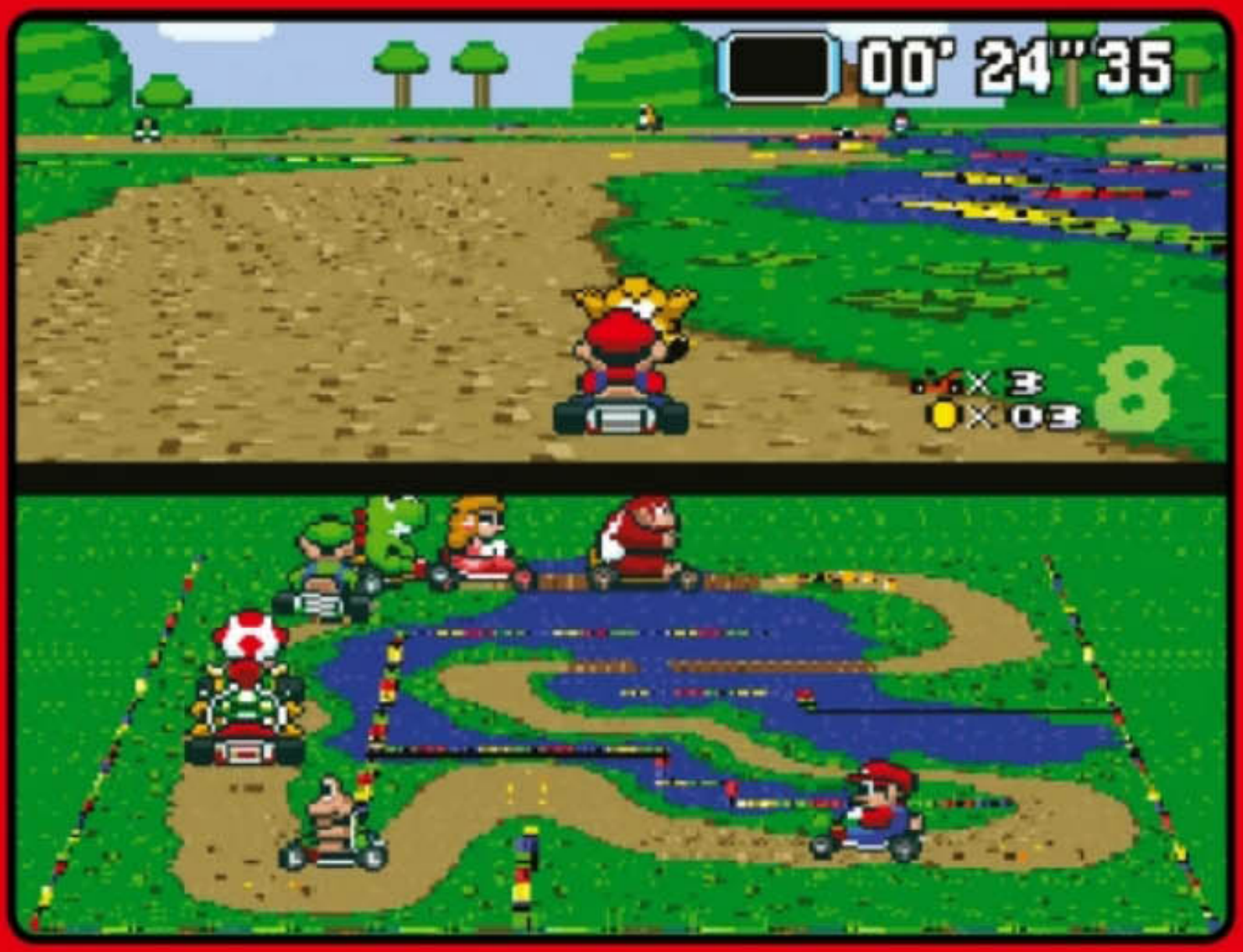


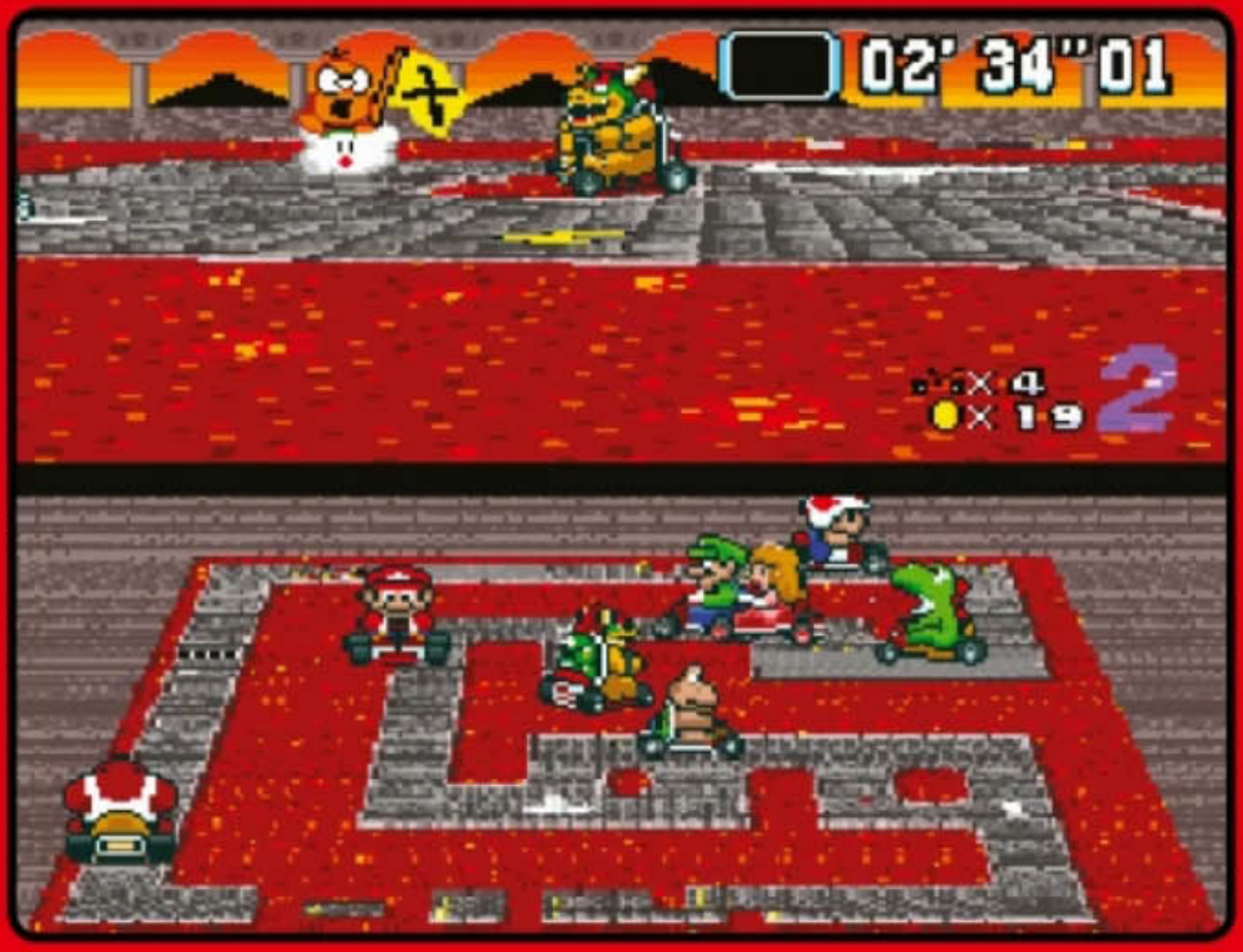
DARRAN
RAINBOW ROAD

■ This track felt like a loving homage to the racers I used to play in my local arcade. It's certainly not the easiest of tracks and I was never amazing at it, but the feeling you get when you complete the course without falling off is mighty sweet.

NICK
DONUT PLAINS 3

■ With a little bit of practice, this course will let you unleash your inner scumbag – which is exactly why I love it. Mastery of mushrooms will allow you to hop over the walls, making for huge sneaky shortcuts that will keep you ahead of the pack.



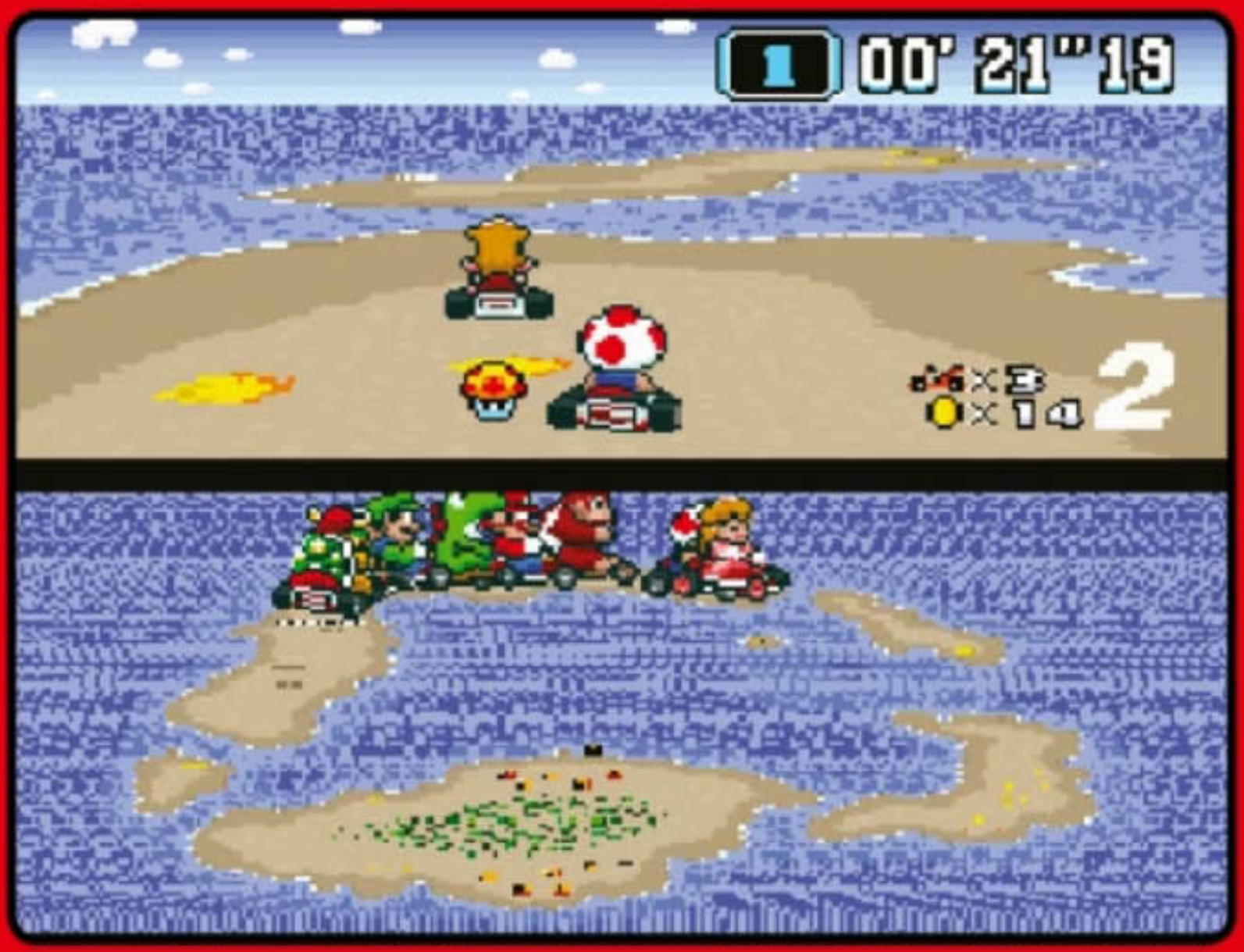


DREW
BOWSER'S CASTLE 2

■ I always felt a degree of trepidation when navigating Bowser's Castle. Maybe it was the Thwomps, and the fact that this was the course that me and my brother would always use in our furious head-to-heads. It's a true test of your karting mettle.

SAM
KOOPA BEACH 1

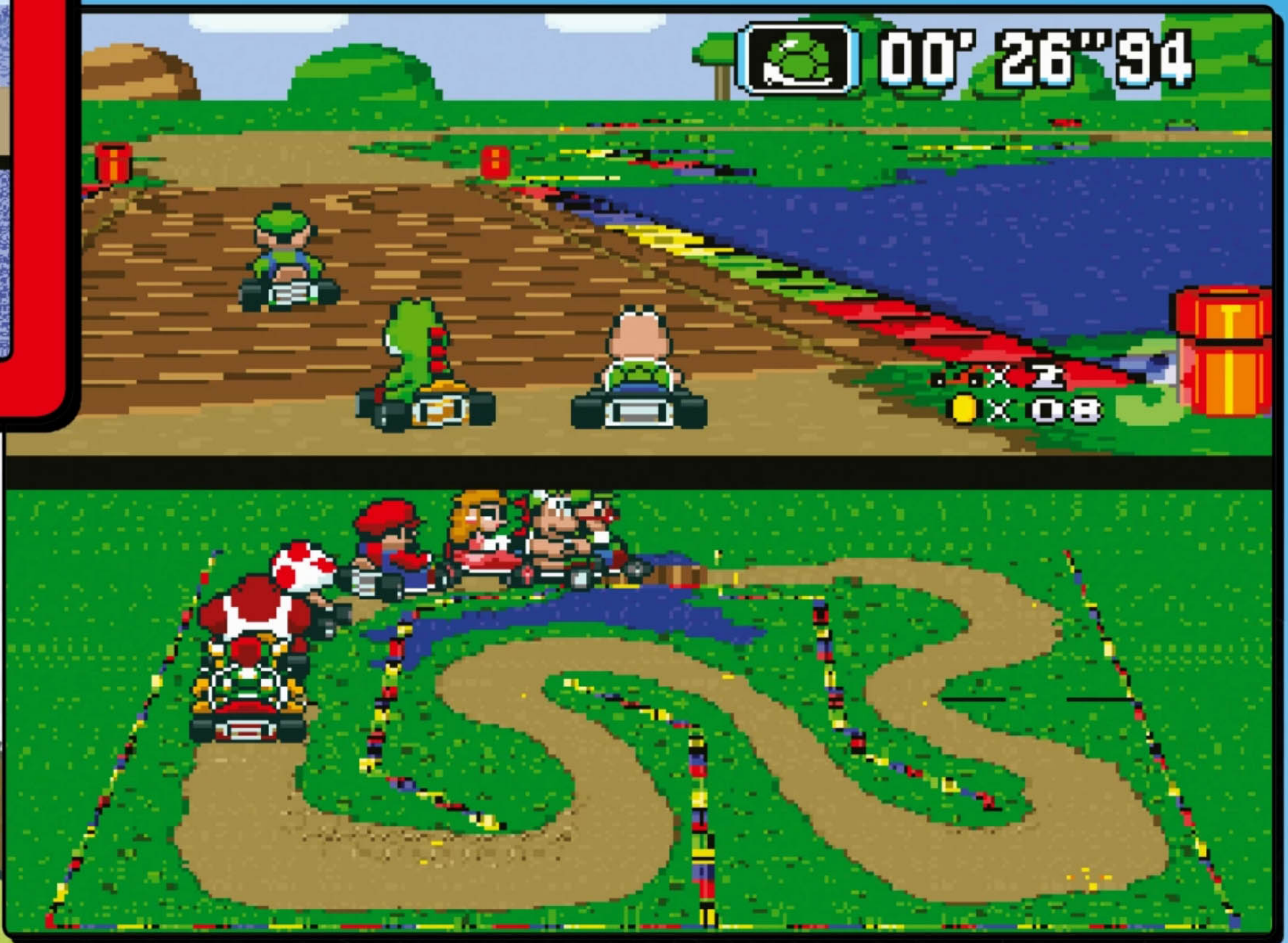
■ I was going to come boldly marching in with Battle Course 1 but unfortunately that parade was briskly cancelled due to rain – courtesy of Darran. I guess I'll go speeding through the shimmering, shallow waters of Koopa Beach while I throw a strop. Hmph.



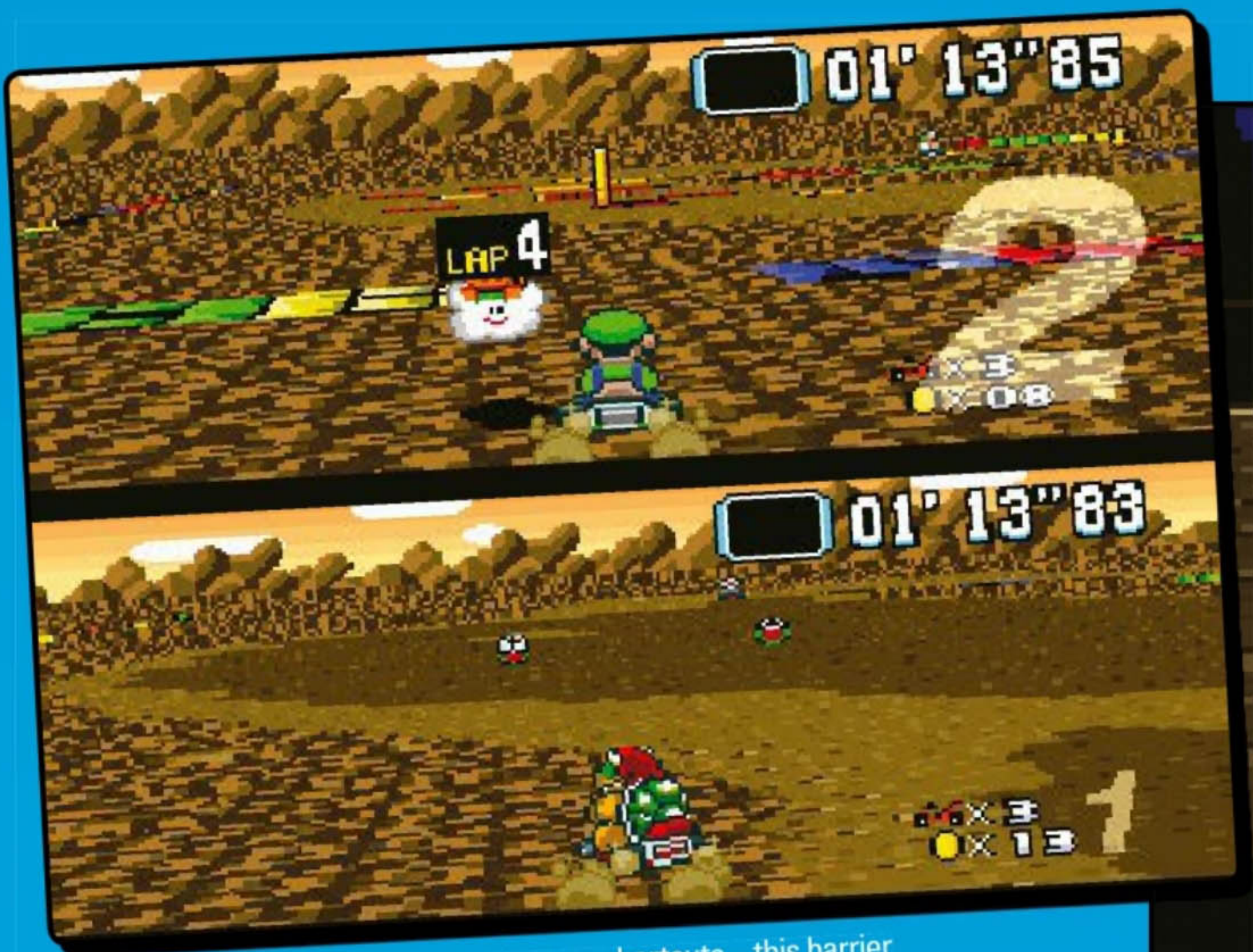
▶ and courses, that product might have been considered good or even great. Once the decision was made to move away from straight racing, though, the team just kept going by adding more elements from the *Mario* platform games. For a start, collectable coins were placed on the course, which would speed up your kart. "This was an idea to add depth to the game. I remember that our boss, Mr Miyamoto, was rather focused on this," says Konno, and it's a point that Miyamoto confirms. "This is a feature that wouldn't be possible in a normal racing game. It seemed like it would be fun to actually place them on the course," he recalls. "I remember that we also made it so you could jump because this was a feature that couldn't be missing from a *Mario* game.

However, the game's defining feature would be the addition of power-up items, which could not only enhance your regular racing attributes such as speed, but also be used to attack other players. "When we decided that we would be making *Mario Kart* as a racing game, I thought that we shouldn't make a normal car-racing game, but instead create something based around the fun of competing for position, using karts as the medium," says Miyamoto. "It was a natural development that we would use items so that players who aren't as good could still have a chance to win, or that players who were behind could have something to give them a helping hand."

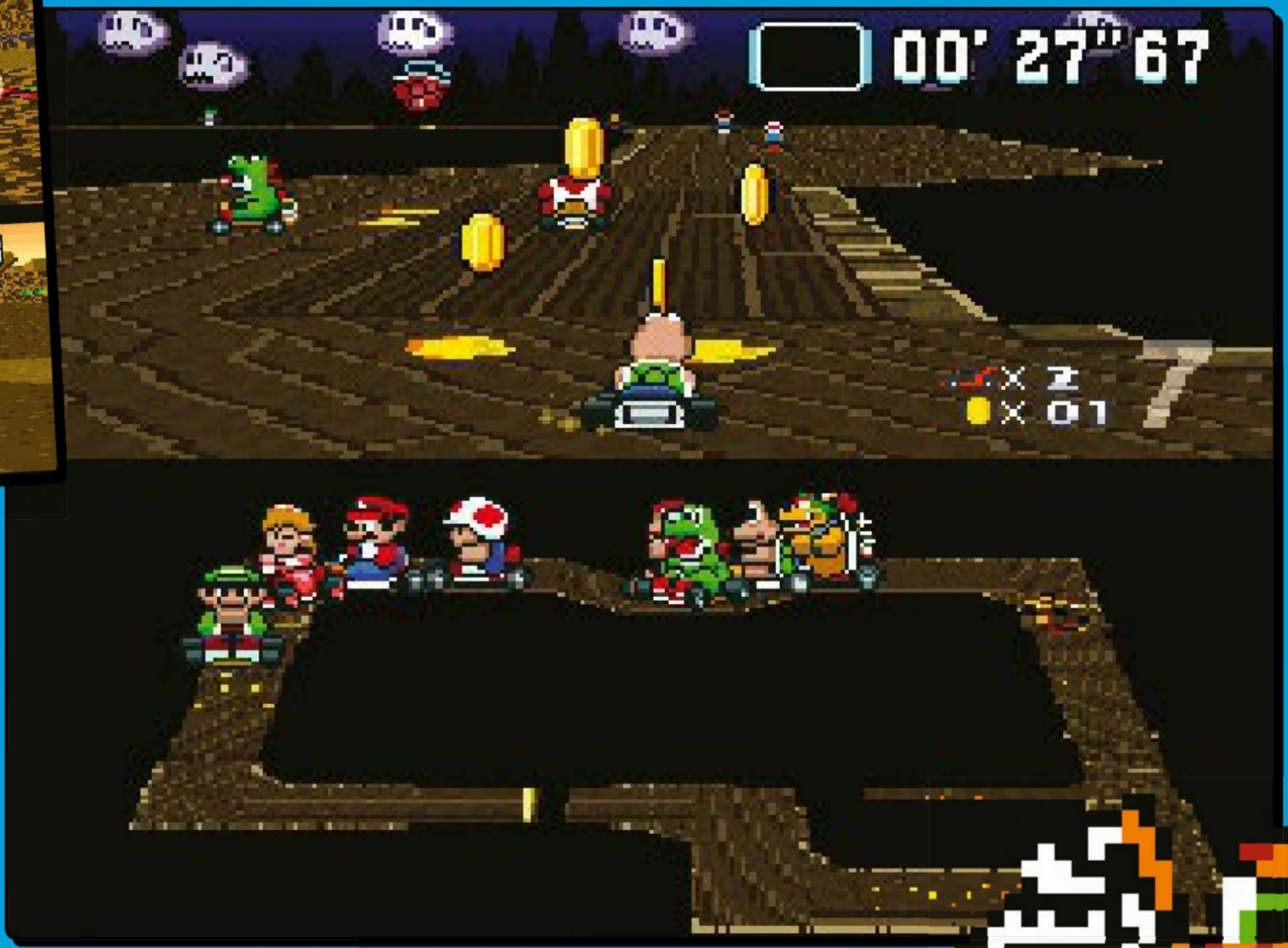
"The first item we made in the prototype was oil, which became the Banana," Konno and Sugiyama add. "We created items making sure they would fit with the *Mario* setting. In order to add offensive, defensive and unique elements to the gameplay while making sure these remained balanced, we added items with a *Mario*-esque design, such as Shells for attacking, Stars for invincibility and Ghosts for stealing other items, all while still prioritising the game processing." Nine items were created in total, each



» The map on the bottom half of the screen never lets you forget how close your opposition was…



» You'll need to be observant to spot some shortcuts – this barrier gap is practically invisible from afar.



» Getting hit won't just slow you down, it'll cause you to lose coins, lowering your top speed.

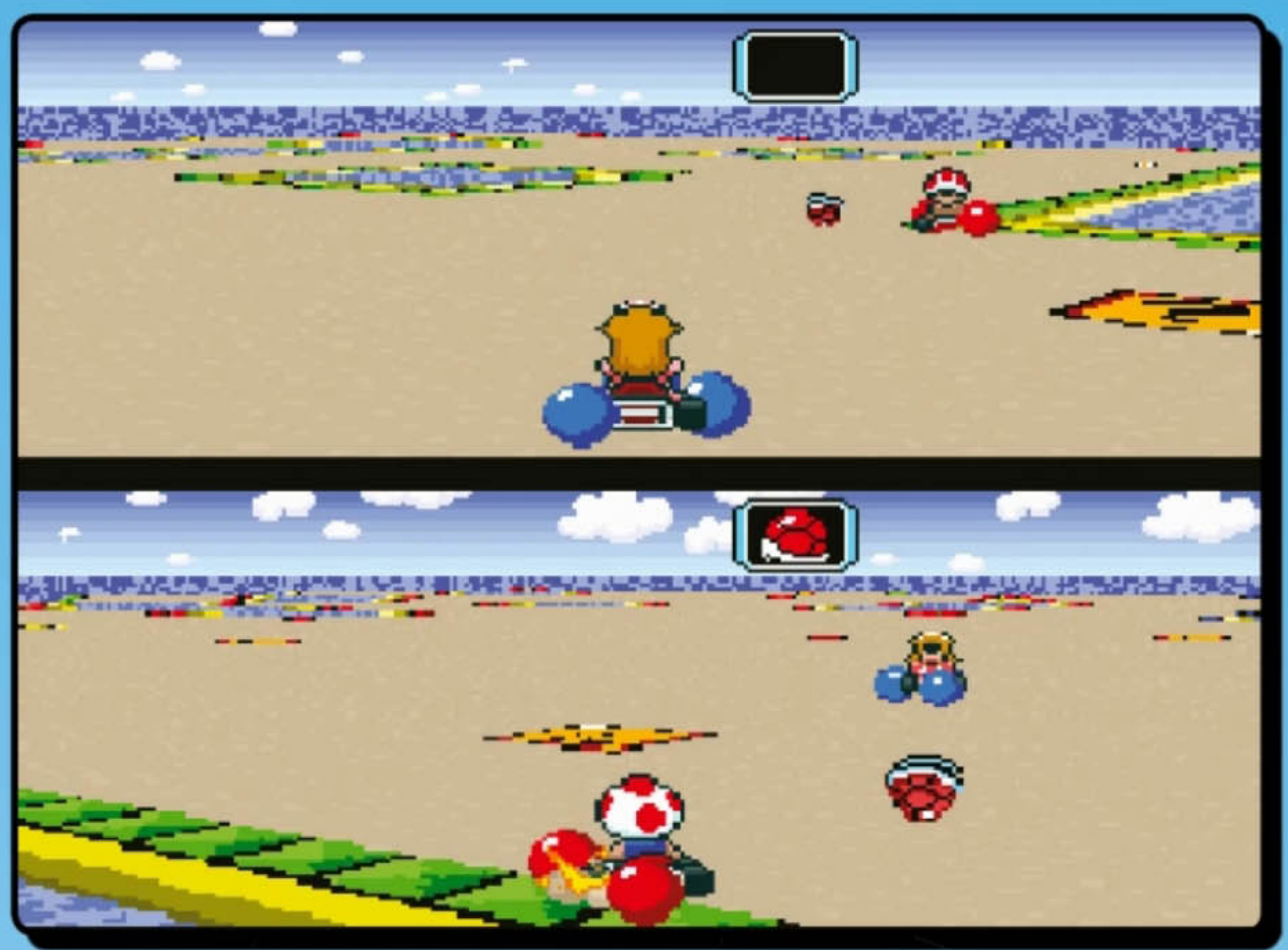
> **"Once I started test playing I would get excited and start shouting out while I played"**
>
> Hideki Konno

thematically in tune with the *Mario* setting – a feature that rival karting games with less well-developed settings would seek to imitate in the future, usually to less success.

The effect of adding items to the game was completely transformative. "Attacking and defending with the items in the game is probably the feature most associated with *Mario Kart*," say Konno and Sugiyama. Our memories of hundreds of Shell attacks and carelessly-hit Banana peels, along with the inevitable rage brought about by such incidents, prove that point perfectly. "Before this game was completed we went through thousands of tests to balance the items. It was really exciting during the test plays when we would win or lose thanks to the effects of the items," he adds with a laugh.

In fact, if you've ever had a strong reaction to *Mario Kart*, it's likely that the development team has shared it. "I really played the game a lot during the adjustment and debug phases of the development. Because of the strong competitive gameplay, once I started test playing I would get excited and start shouting out while I played," Konno elaborates. "I just couldn't help it because of the randomness and potential for making huge comebacks. It's frustrating to lose even if it's just part of debugging, so I would keep playing… I mean test playing over and over," he laughs. "I may have been a bit distracting for the development teams working on other projects."

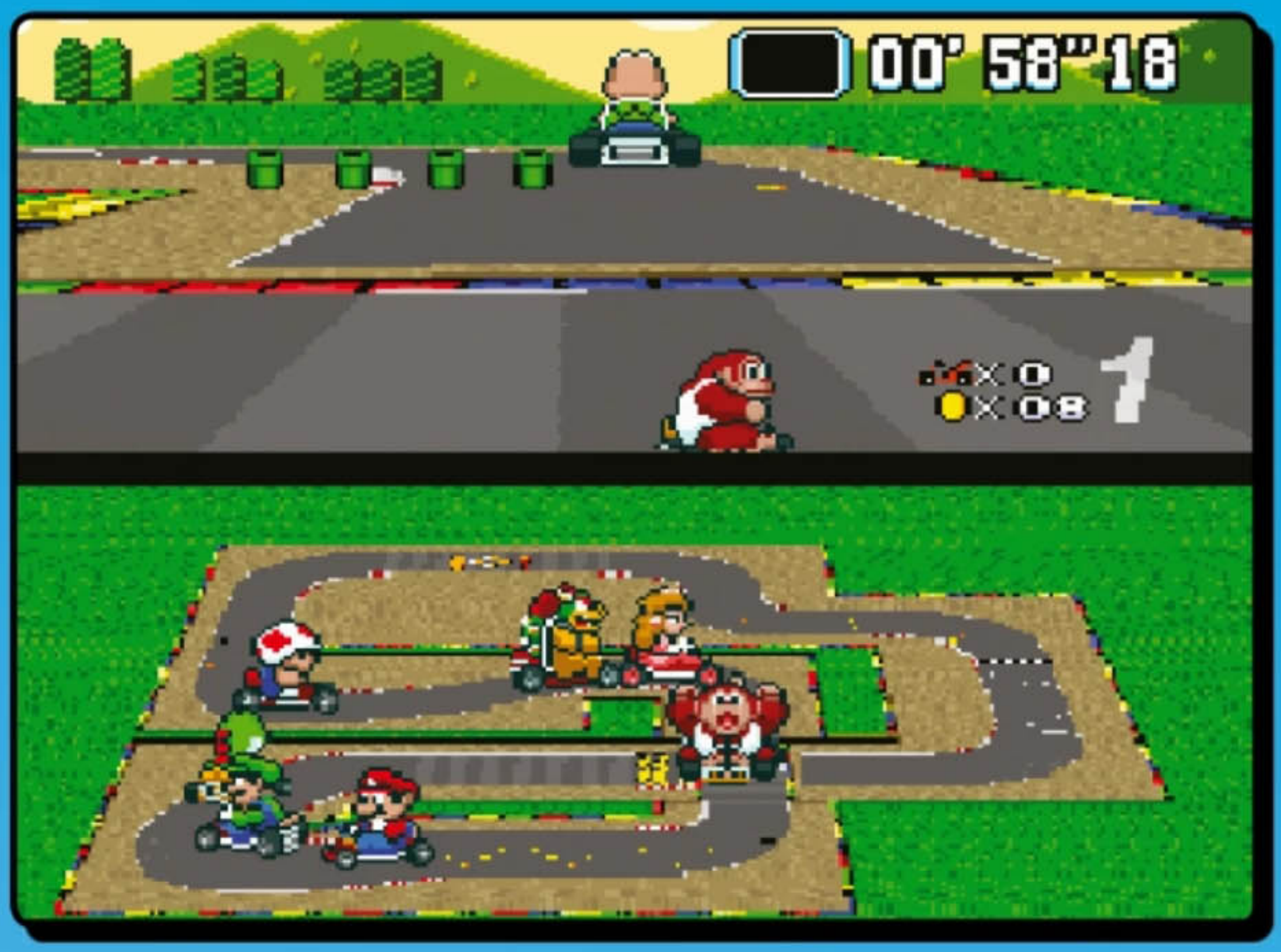
That potential for huge comebacks wasn't added by chance, either. "I'm not very good at racing games so, to give me a chance to win, I adjusted the item chances so that you'd get more powerful items the further back in the pack you were," confirms Sugiyama. "Because of this, even I could make more sudden-comeback victories, meaning I could play against even the skilled players." This proved to be a huge boost to the longevity of the game – multiplayer gameplay was made friendly to newcomers, as although there was a definite gap between the performance of the best and worst players, there was no guarantee that superior course knowledge and racing chops would result in victory every time. Everyone from your little brother to your grandma could play it and have a half-decent shot at victory.



» Peach takes out Toad with a well-timed Red Shell, but he's got one of his own in stock…

Of course, if they didn't win races, there was also a Battle Mode to allow them to take out their frustrations on you. "Battle Mode was an idea that came up while we were making the racing mode. It wasn't part of the original plan," say Konno and Sugiyama. "The competitive gameplay has strong shooter elements, and as we were experimenting with lots of different things, we found this fun to play, and better than we expected, so we decided to include it," explain the developers. "I wanted to create it as a game that works properly with two players. These players could then battle against each other just like in *Mario Bros.*," adds Miyamoto, referring to the original 1983 arcade game.

Everything made sense in multiplayer, but the single-player experience exhibited a couple of oddities. The first was that even the single-player racing employs the same split-screen view of the action as the multiplayer mode. "The core of this game is the two-player multiplayer split-screen mode which we managed to achieve," explain Konno and Sugiyama. "We developed the game so that it could make use of a complete two-player competitive game system. The full map and rear-view mirror in the bottom half of the screen in single player were also extensions of that system. These features were achieved using camera angles and scaling adjustments. You could say it's the result of using the features efficiently."

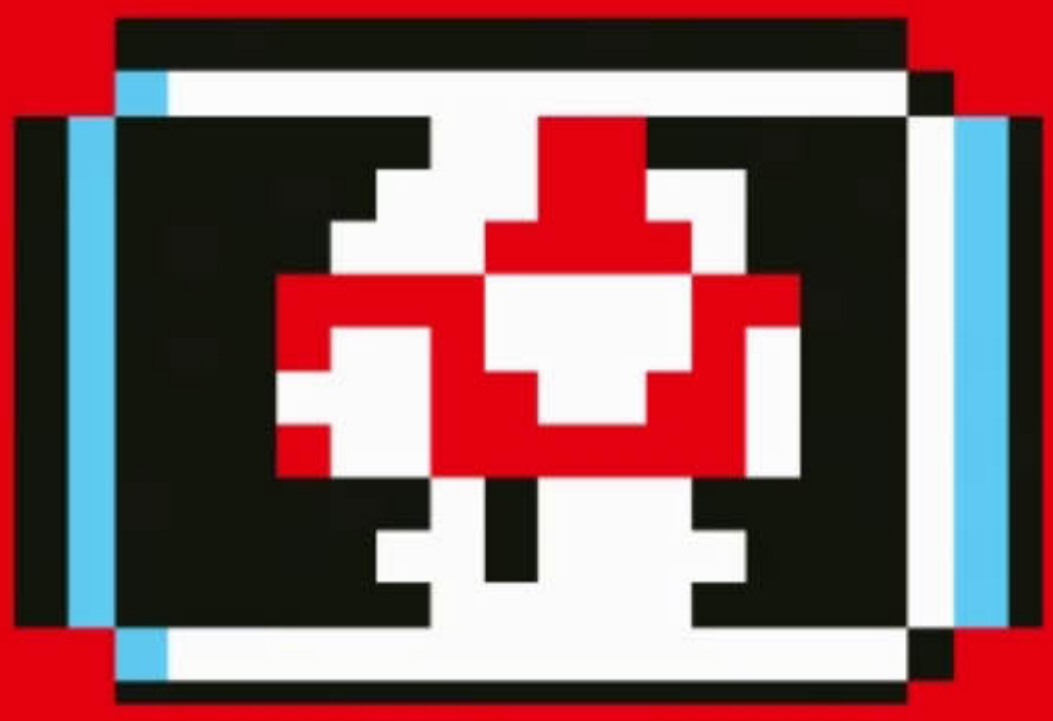


» Without being able to use 3D objects, Nintendo had to get creative with jumps to pull off crossover tracks.

The other oddity was in the use of items. While your racer would receive random items, CPU-controlled racers would only ever use their own fixed items, some of which were unavailable to players. "We ▶

HIT STOP

Mario Kart, and kart racers in general, just wouldn't be the same without the ability to attack your fellow racers or close the gap with a boost. We take a look at the items that were on offer in 1992…

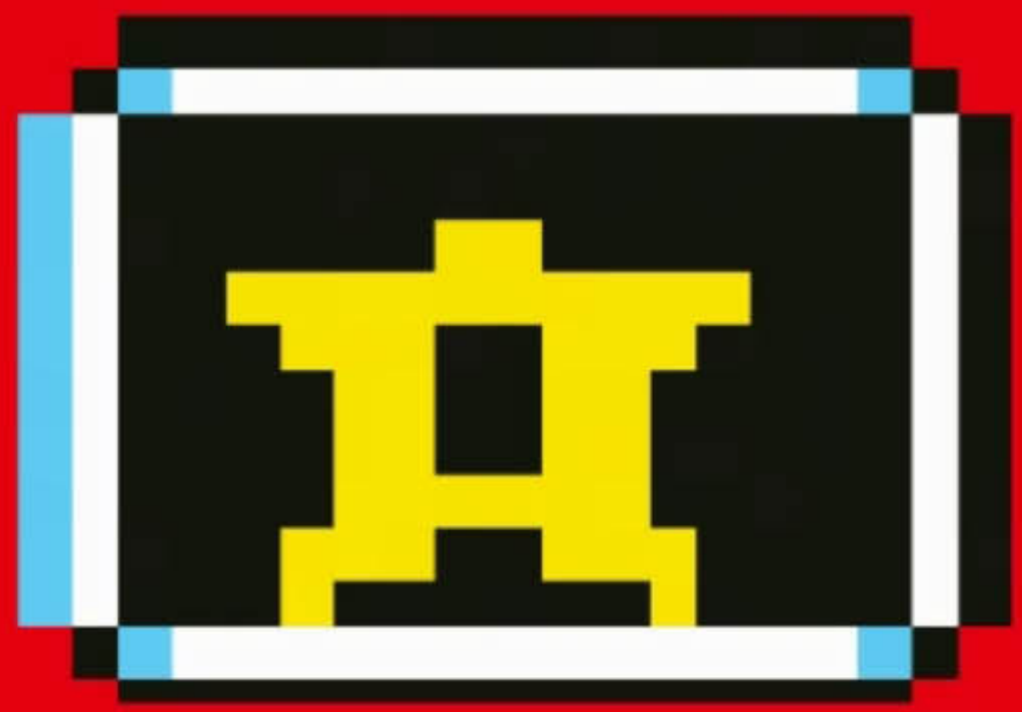


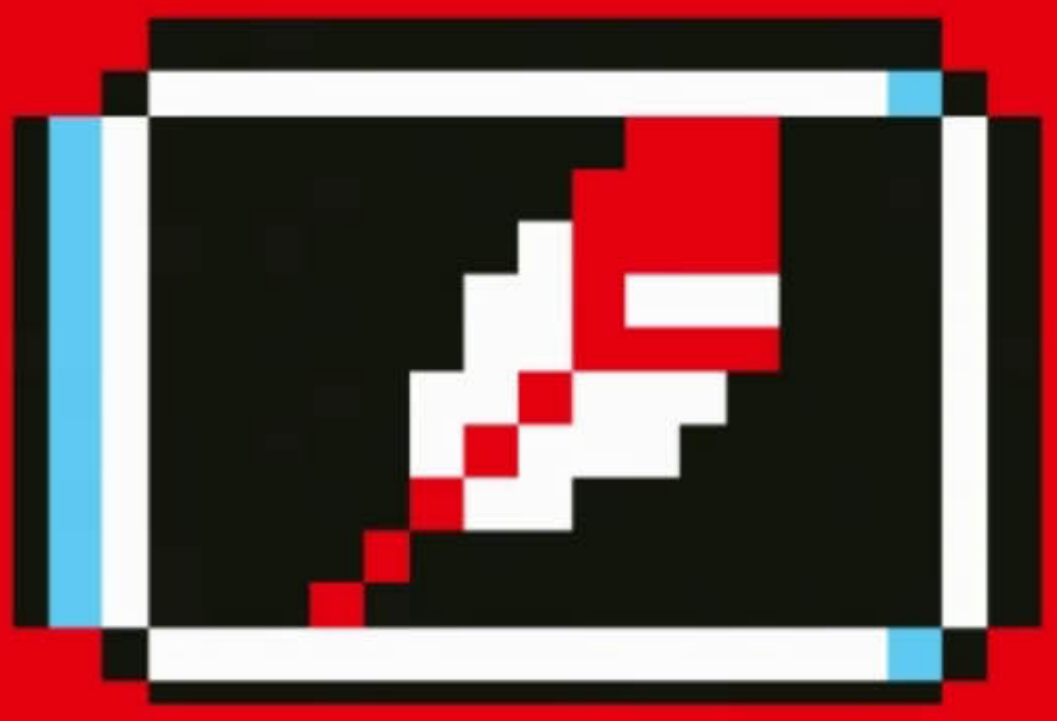
MUSHROOM

■ This item gives you a brief burst of speed, and is commonly handed out to racers that are falling behind the pack. Use it to cover rough terrain for a handy shortcut!

STAR

■ If you're struggling to keep up, you may receive this rare item. It both temporarily boosts your speed and enables you to attack other racers by ramming them.



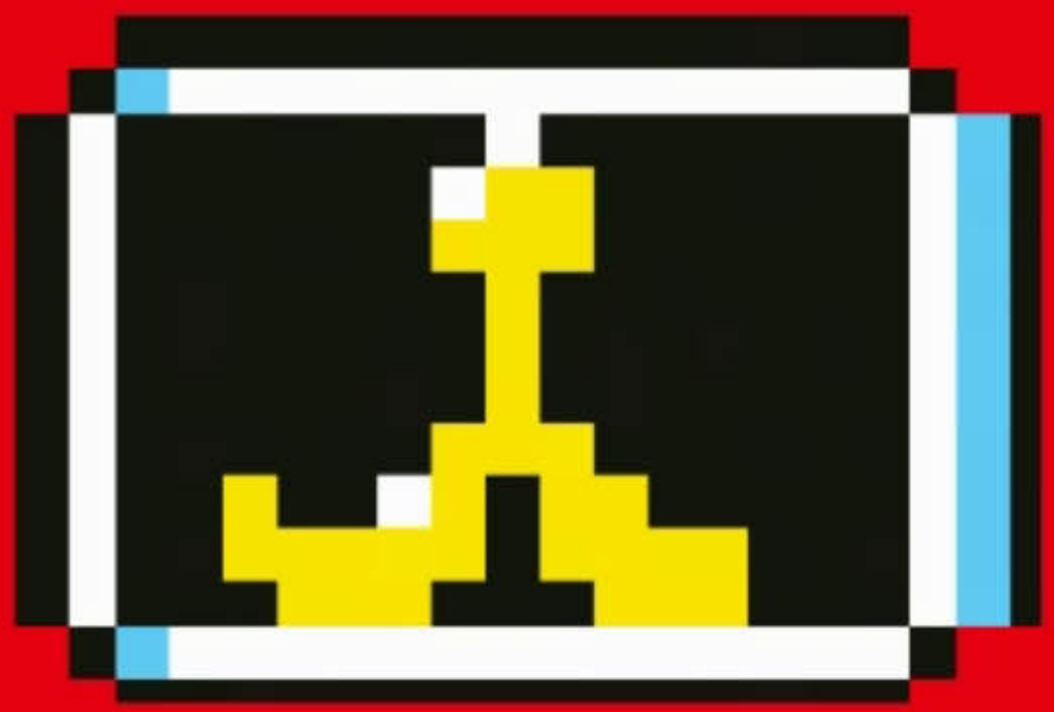


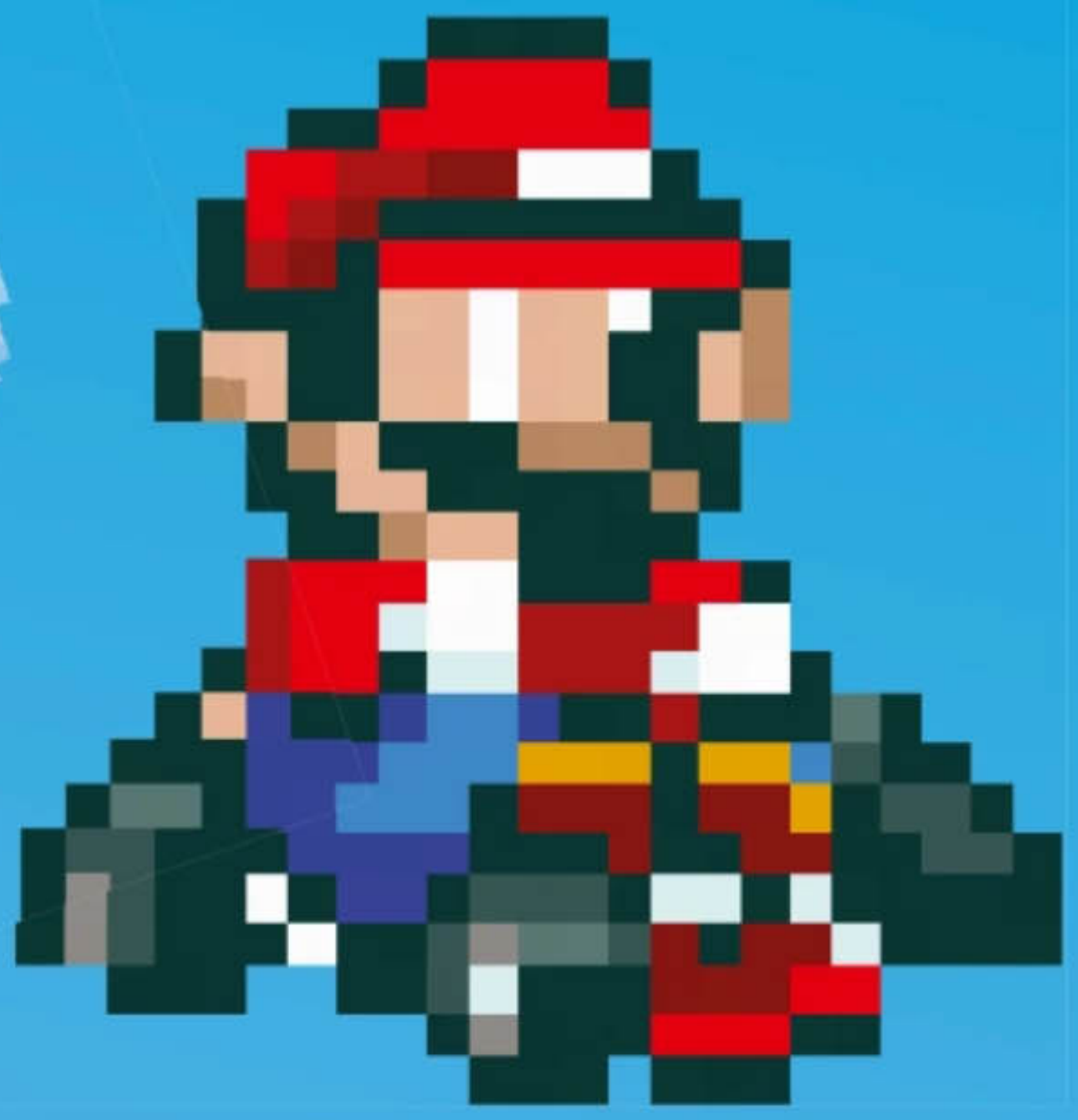
FEATHER

■ Using the feather will allow for a super high jump that creates major shortcut opportunities. These are most commonly found in the Ghost Valley circuits.

BANANA PEEL

■ This defensive item is commonly dished out to the frontrunners, and can be thrown forwards or backwards. If another racer hits it, they'll spin out immediately!

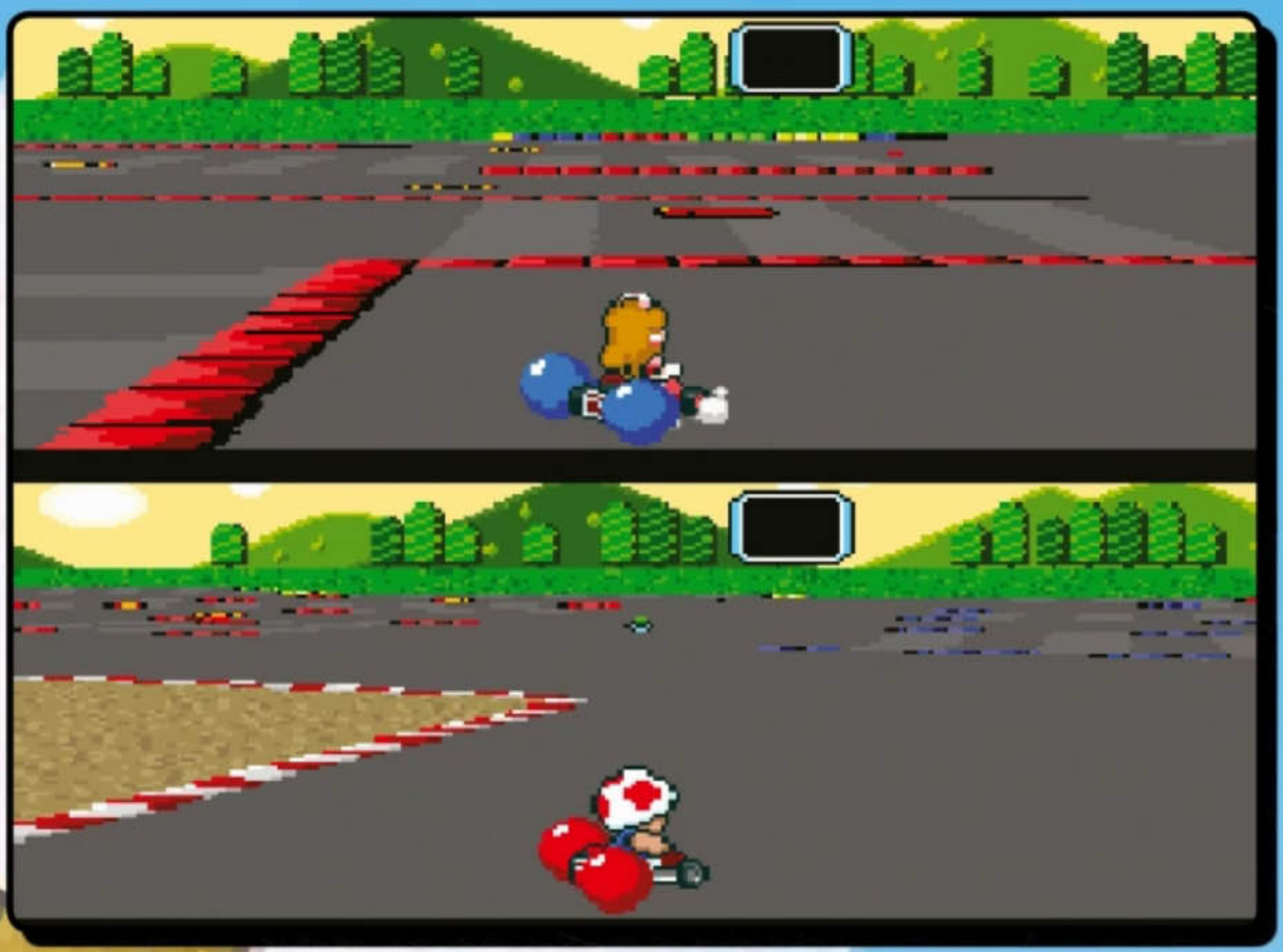




▶ wanted to give each character some personality. By giving the CPU racers some individuality it adds something special to the single-player mode, expanding the gameplay and making it more fun," explains Konno. "At the same time, with the hardware limitations and technical abilities of the time, it was difficult to implement the kind of logic that would allow CPU racers to use items well," he continues. "So we racked our brains about how we could make the game fun, and this was the result. In later titles we made it so that the CPU racers could also use the normal items properly throughout the game."

> "We were also playing the game as we were making it, so I knew it was fun"
>
> Tadashi Sugiyama

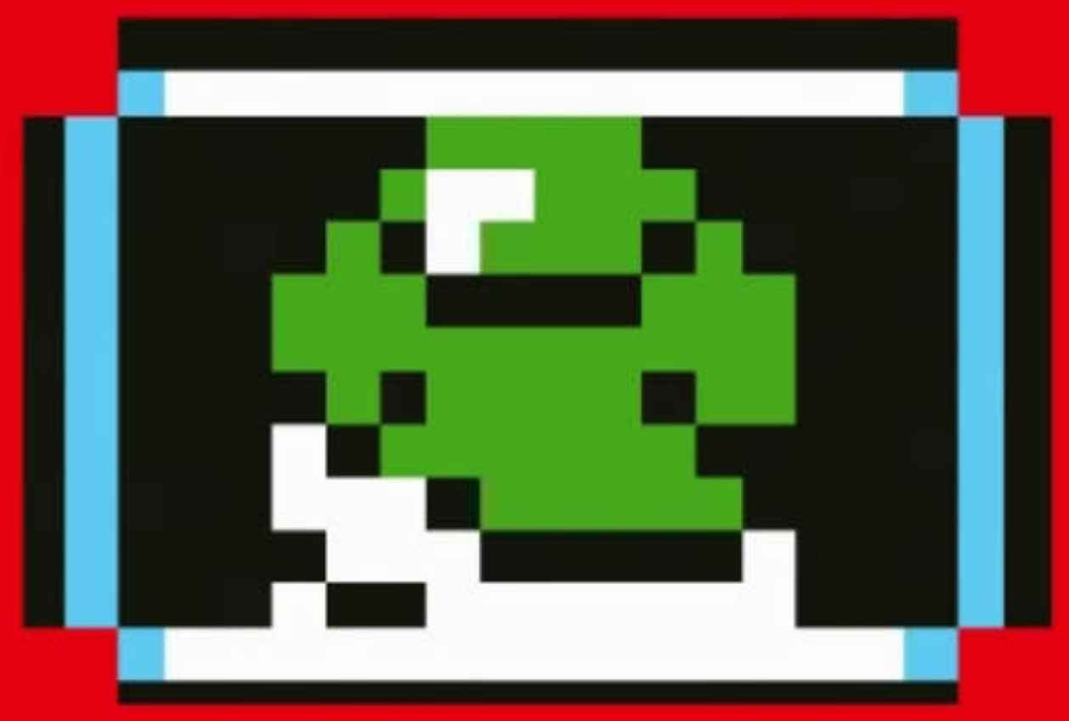
When *Super Mario Kart* was finished in 1992, the development team was pleased with having come up with a creative solution to a hard technical limitation. "Looking from the perspective of how to create *F-Zero*-style gameplay within such a small area, it seemed a huge challenge from both a planning and technical sense," says Konno. "We were able to overcome the technical problem by using karts. Instead of thinking conservatively and continuing to struggle with the problems, we came to a positive outcome by dramatically changing the gameplay." Despite this, the team had no idea of the success that it would go on to achieve. "We were also playing the game as we were making it, so I knew it was fun, but I didn't imagine that users would actually like it that much," says Sugiyama.



Like it they did, though – in a 92% review in *Nintendo Magazine System*, Jaz Rignall noted the two-player racer as "fast, furious and highly addictive racing action – the best yet seen on the SNES". *N-Force* awarded it 88%, with Nick Roberts noting that "with a few mates the game bursts into life", while *Super Play* offered 94%, calling battle mode "simply the best two-player game ever". In America, reviewers were similarly taken with the game. *GamePro* offered it a full 5/5 Fun Factor rating, while the four reviewers from *Electronic Gaming Monthly* offered it two 9/10 and two 8/10 scores, calling it "the best driving game to come along for some time".

Players took notice of this praise and picked up the game in their droves, with more players catching onto the game through playing with friends. The game eventually sold a massive 8.76 million copies, placing it behind only *Super Mario World* and *Donkey Kong Country* as the third-highest-selling SNES game as all time, comfortably ahead of the fourth-placed *Street Fighter II* by over 2 million copies. Despite being so common, demand for *Super Mario Kart* is still very high today amongst SNES collectors – you'll be lucky to find a loose PAL cartridge on eBay for less than £20, and boxed copies naturally sell for more.

When asked why he thinks *Super Mario Kart* was so successful, Konno is quick to point to the multiplayer appeal of the game. "I think maybe lots of people played it as a kind of 'competitive communication



GREEN SHELL

■ Once fired, this projectile weapon will continue in a straight path until it hits a wall, at which point it'll rebound off. It's a key item for experienced racers with deadly aim.

RED SHELL

■ Hitting a wall will stop your Red Shell, but if you fired it at the right time it won't do that, because Red Shells home in on nearby racers for a deadly strike.

BOO

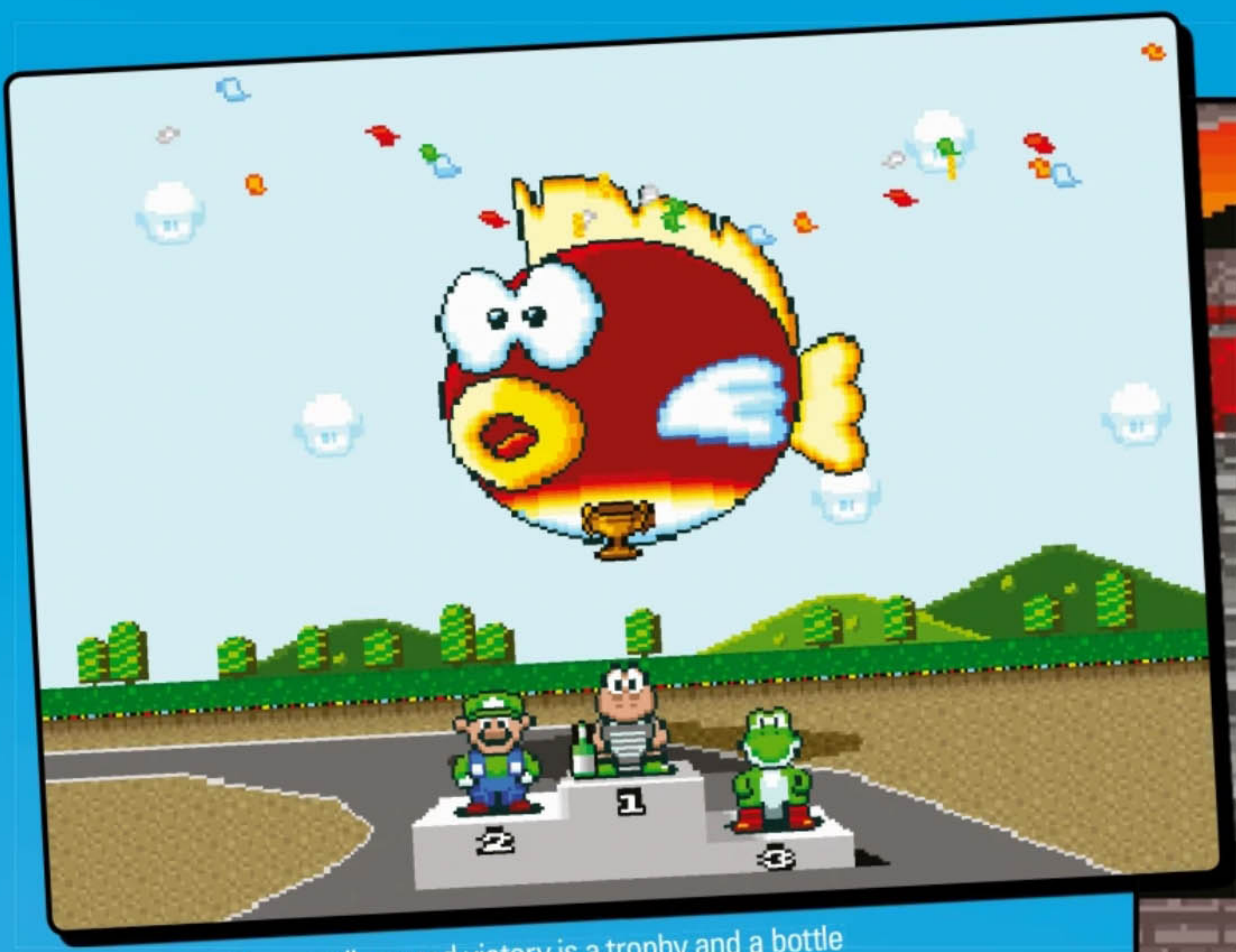
■ Using the Boo will give you a ghostly countenance, turning you invisible and allowing you to pass through other racers – but stealing your opponent's item is the best bit.

COIN

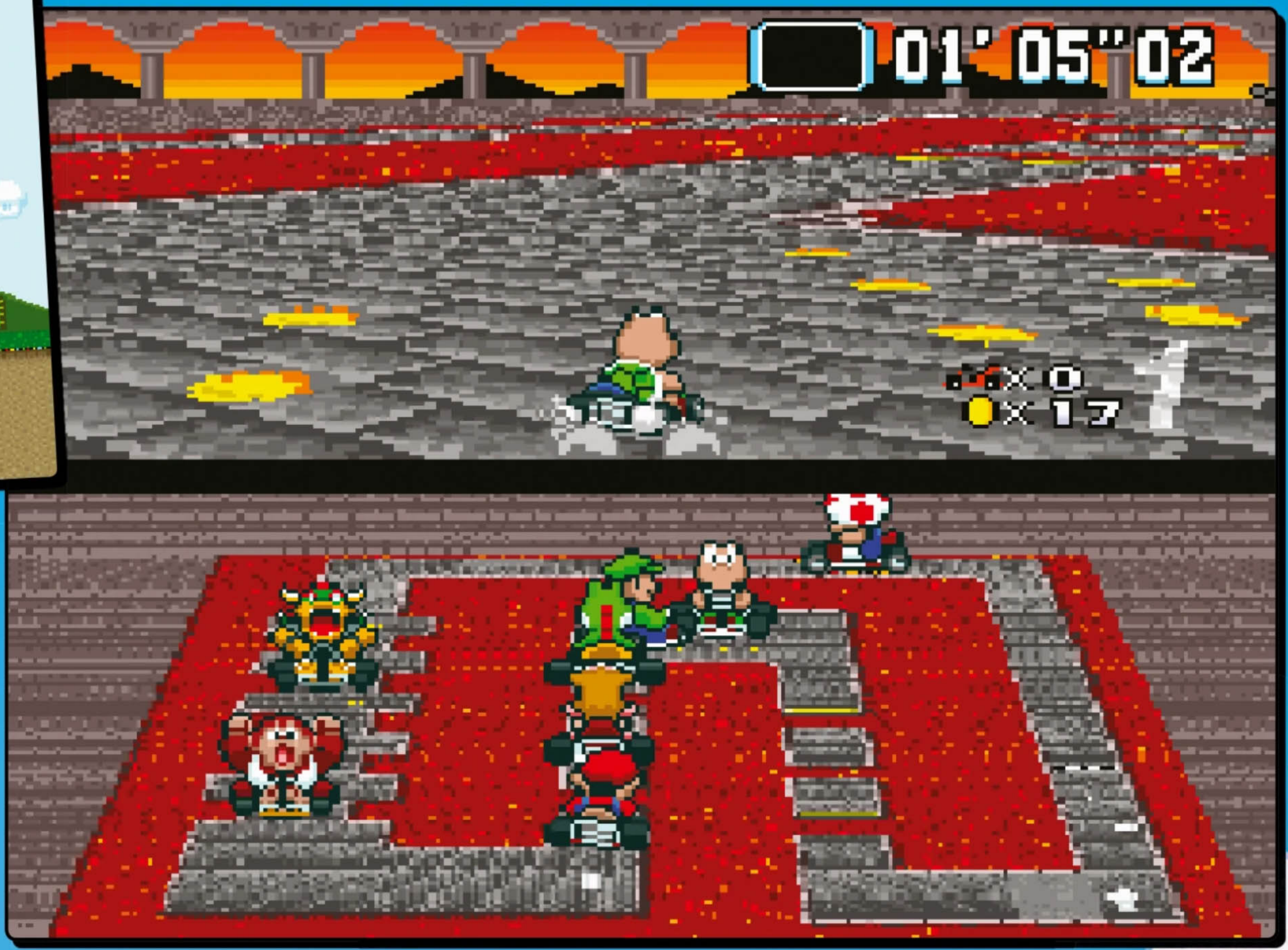
■ Pulling the trigger on this item will give you a couple of coins, boosting your top speed for as long as you happen to hold on to them and giving you an edge on your competitors.

LIGHTNING

■ This exceptionally uncommon item causes huge commotion, shrinking enemy racers except for the user. From there, they're slow and easy to squash with your wheels.



» The reward for a well-earned victory is a trophy and a bottle of… what do Koopas drink?



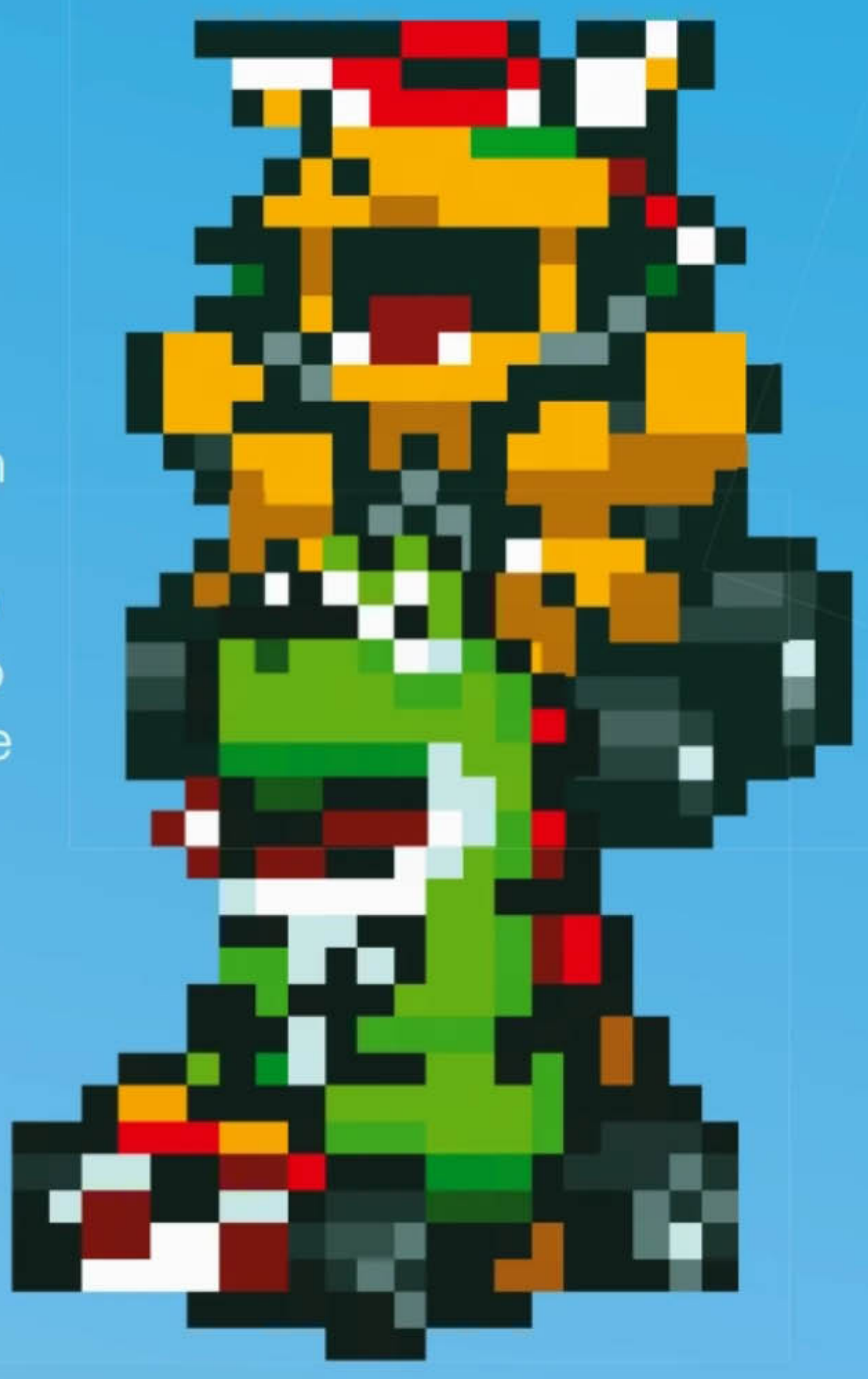
» Sliding around corners is a key skill for any *Super Mario Kart* player to master.

tool' – a way to connect with others though multiplayer – back before network multiplayer was popular, and got really into the game, playing it over a long time, including the parts like time trials that can be played over and over."

While other companies might have been tempted to cash in on the success of *Super Mario Kart* with a quick sequel, Nintendo exhibited great restraint with the series – in part because the original game was already pushing the boundaries of what was possible on the SNES. The first sequel to the 16-bit original wasn't created until 1996, when *Mario Kart 64* could take advantage of new technology to radically alter track design. This sequel proved that the original was no one-hit wonder, and many more followed – although never more than one per hardware generation, ensuring that the series stays special. With eight main games having been made, the *Mario Kart* series stands at over 100 million sales.

With such a history of success behind the *Mario Kart* series, we're keen to know how Nintendo tries to maintain the legacy of the original when creating the sequels. For Sugiyama, there's one key ingredient. "*Mario Kart* is not *Mario Kart* without the items. The opportunities that come from using the items mean that both skilled and unskilled players can play this game together," he says. "A key characteristic of *Mario Kart* is how it's often the case that you can't win just with your driving skills alone, with the races being very close as everyone does everything they can to get over the finish line first." Although he hasn't been hands-on with the series since 2003's *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*, it's clear to see that the designers of subsequent games agree with his philosophy of bringing players of disparate skill levels together.

"We aimed to create a game that's fun to play with family, friends, with everyone," concurs Konno, who has remained involved with the series right through to *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe*. "We tried to design the game so everyone could enjoy the thrill of driving, and everyone could have a chance to win, but playing it a lot will still put you on top. The first *Mario Kart* title had split-screen multiplayer, and with Nintendo DS it became possible to play with eight players over wireless communication, and with people from across the world online. This is the most important element that's been carried over from the concepts of the original *Mario Kart* game." ▶

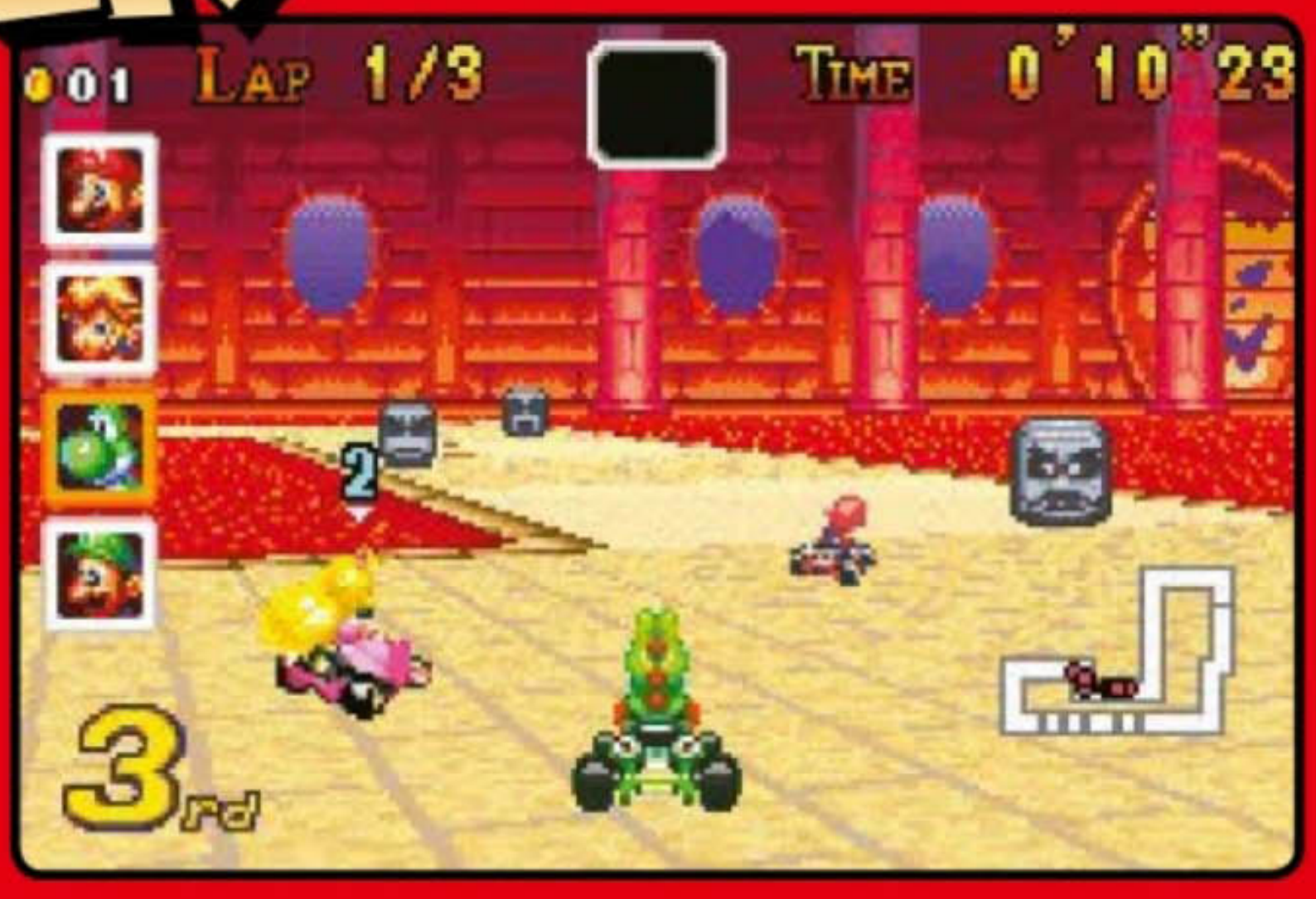


MARIO KART
TIMELINE ATTACK

Here's how the legacy of Super Mario Kart unfolded over the 25 years since its launch…

MARIO KART 64
N64, 1996

■ The first sequel to *Super Mario Kart* used the N64's power to move the series into full 3D, allowing for more dynamic course designs. It also bumped the player count from two to four and introduced the dreaded Blue Shell.



MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT
GAME BOY ADVANCE, 2001

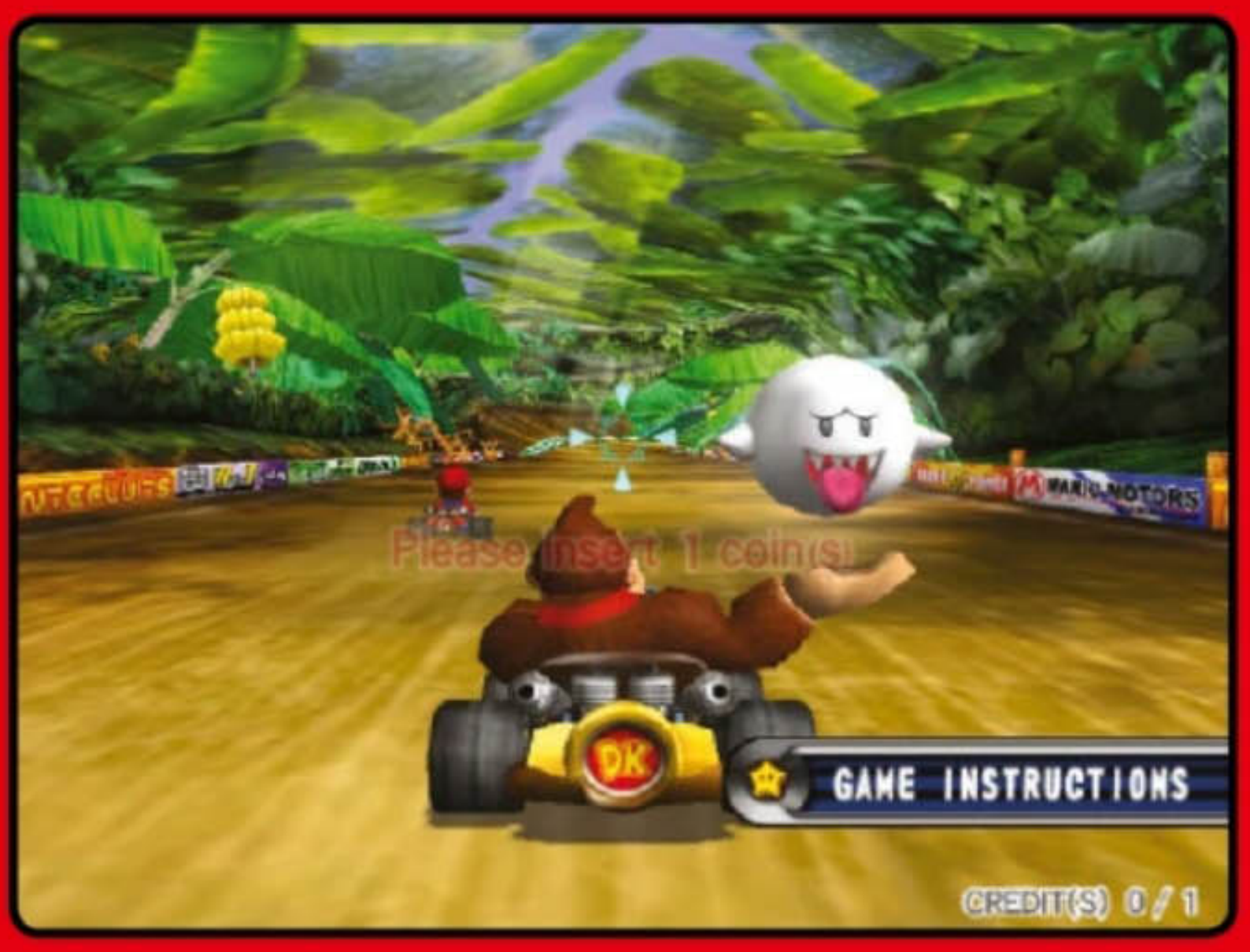
■ Like the SNES original, the first handheld *Mario Kart* used Mode-7-style flat, rotating tracks. It also included the SNES courses as unlockable extras, combining with the game's 20 brand-new tracks for a mammoth roster of 40.

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
GAMECUBE, 2003

■ This experimental title required players to pick two racers which could be freely swapped during the race, and karts were also chosen separately. Special weapons for each racer were also included, for regular players as well as the CPU.

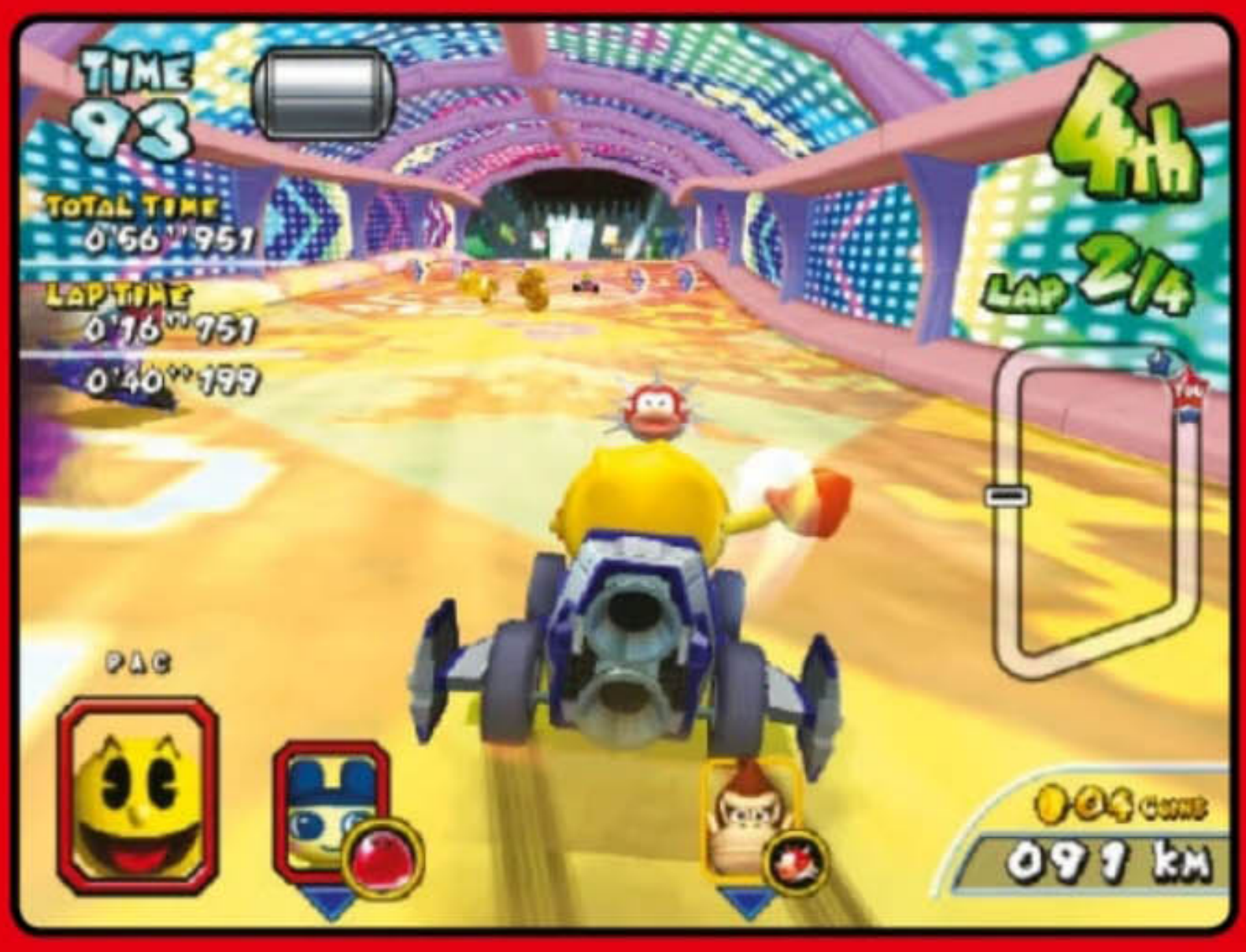
MARIO KART DS
DS, 2005

■ The second handheld *Mario Kart* game was Nintendo's big step into the world of online gaming, offering friends the chance to play against one another without bundling onto a sofa together. The inclusion of retro tracks was also made into a permanent fixture here.



MARIO KART ARCADE GP
ARCADE, 2005

■ The first coin-op instalment in the series was developed by Namco and included Pac-Man as a special guest racer. A ridiculous 93 items are included, and for the first time since the original, on-track coins make their return.

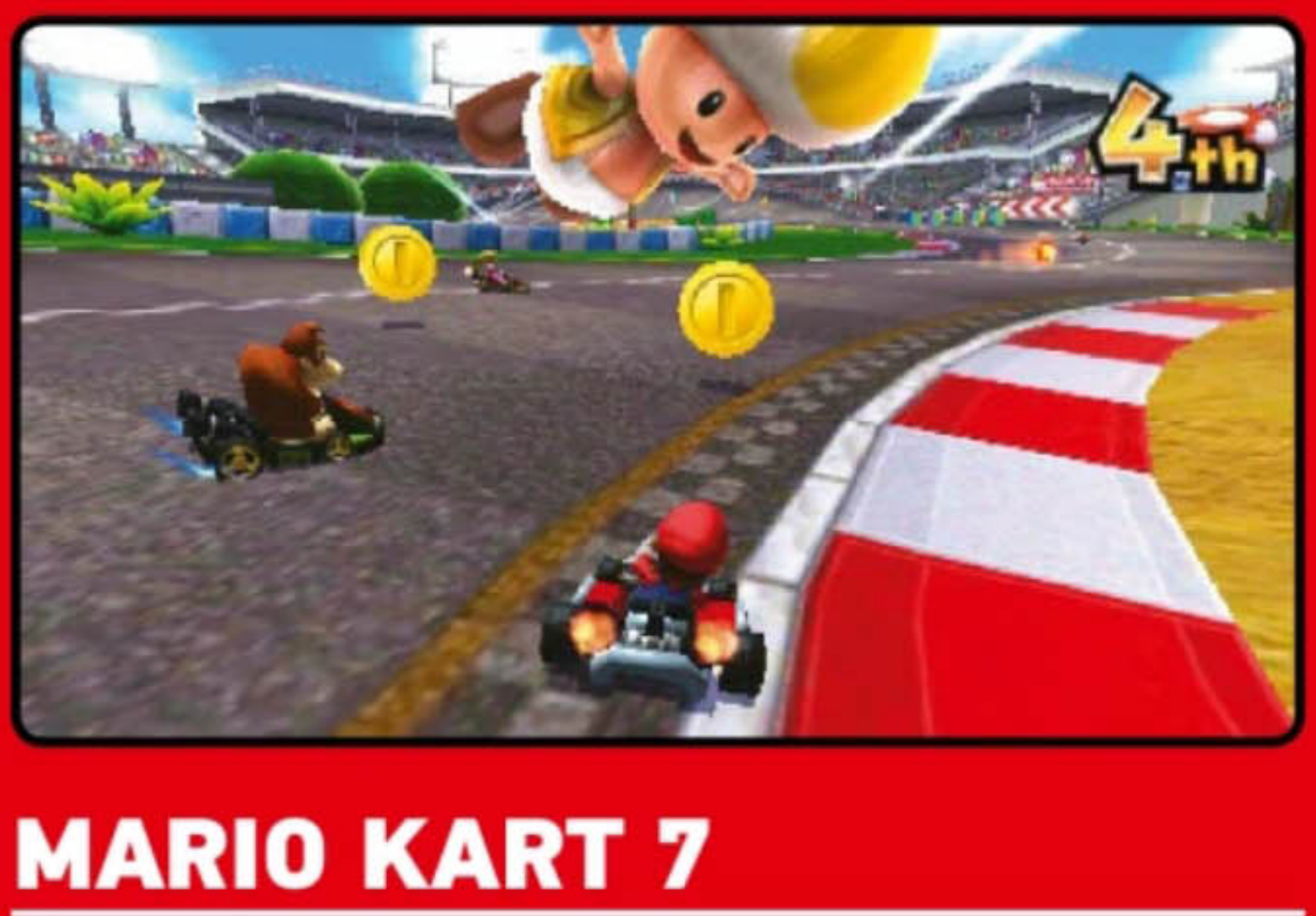


MARIO KART ARCADE GP 2
ARCADE, 2007

■ This is more of an update than a full-blown sequel, featuring the original game's content as well as new items, racers, tracks and a somewhat irritating colour commentator. Unlike the original, export models allowed players to use magnetic memory cards.

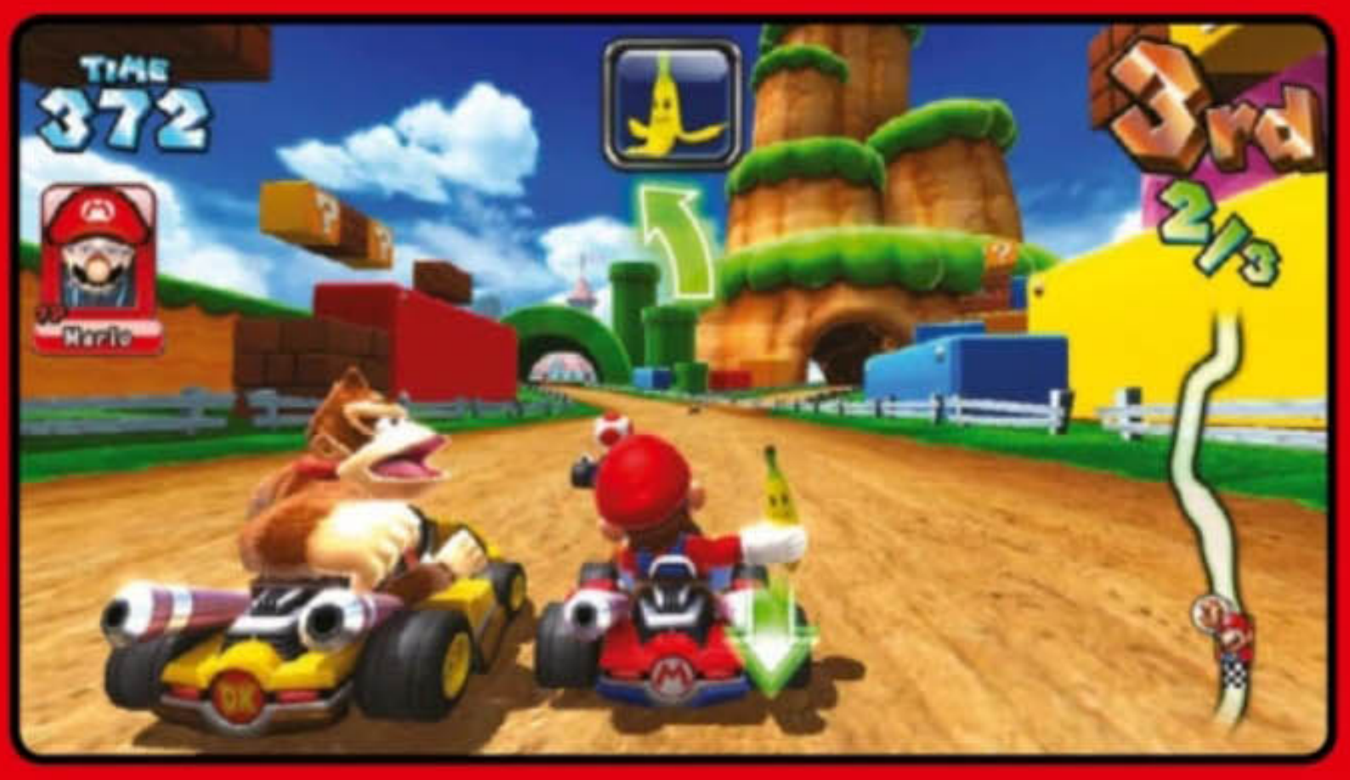
MARIO KART WII
WII, 2008

■ Races were bumped up to 12 participants here, with widened tracks to accommodate the added competition. For the first time, players could choose to use motorbikes instead of karts, and motion controls mimicking the use of a steering wheel were added.



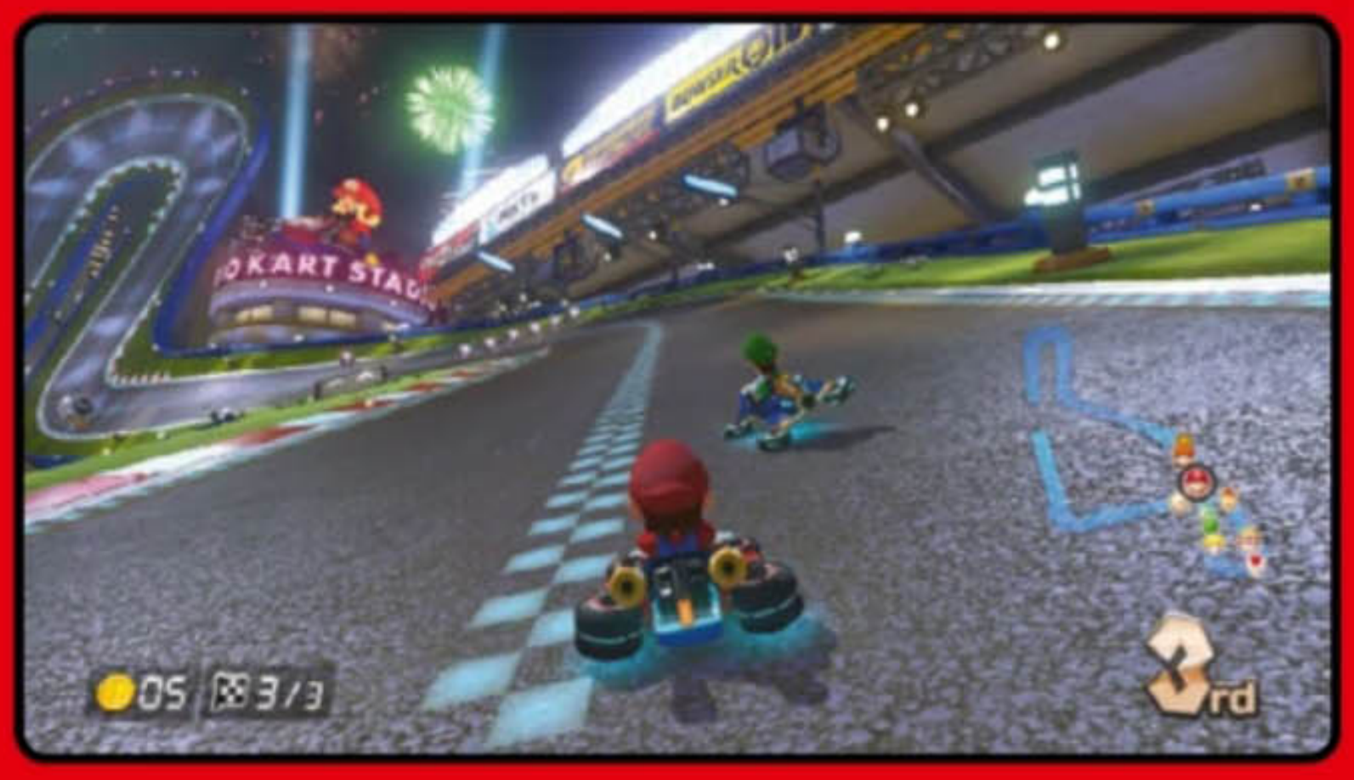
MARIO KART 7
3DS, 2011

■ Codeveloped by Retro Studios and Nintendo EAD, this game returned coins to the main series after a lengthy absence, and added underwater and gliding sections. It was also possible to build your kart from three main components – body, wheels and glider.



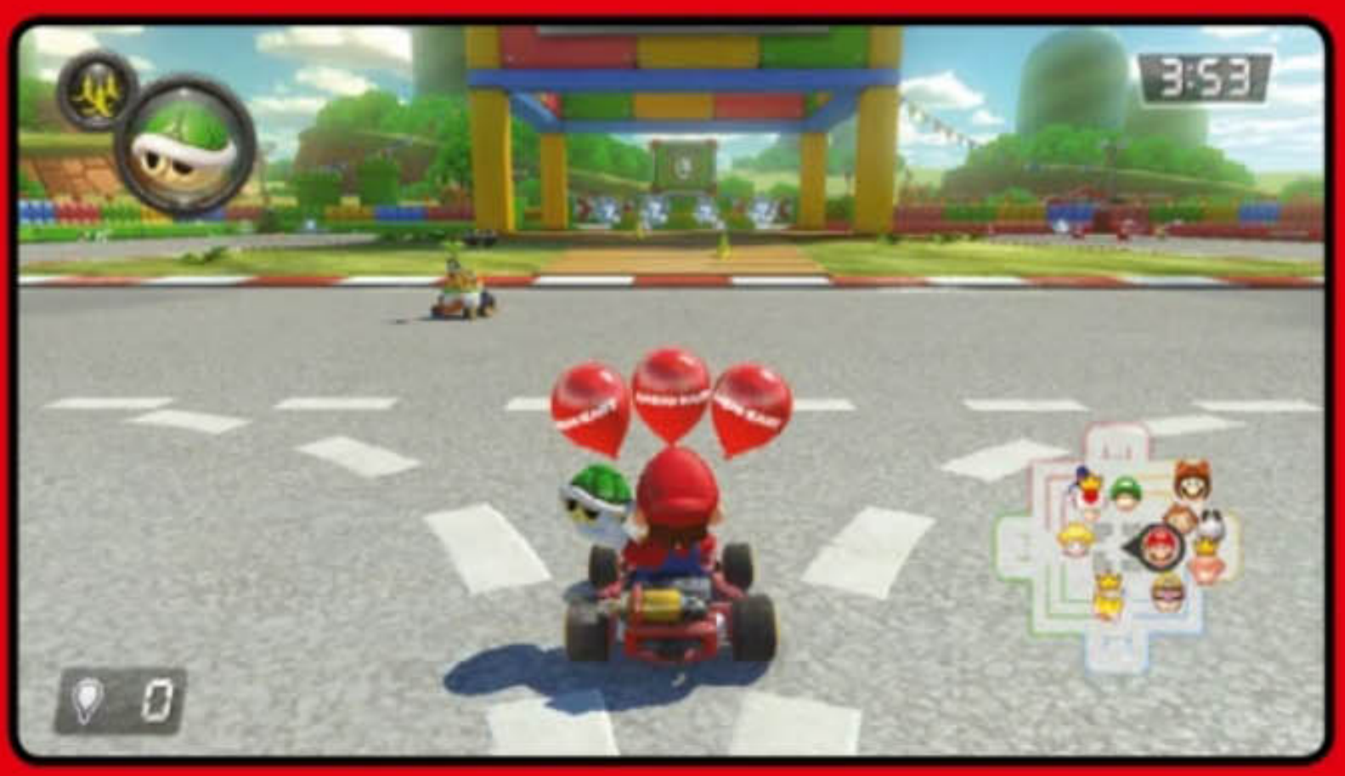
MARIO KART ARCADE GP DX
ARCADE, 2013

■ This major overhaul of the *Mario Kart Arcade GP* series adds heavy modifications to existing track layouts, including the addition of underwater and gliding sections. It's also still being updated today, and can be found in Western arcades.



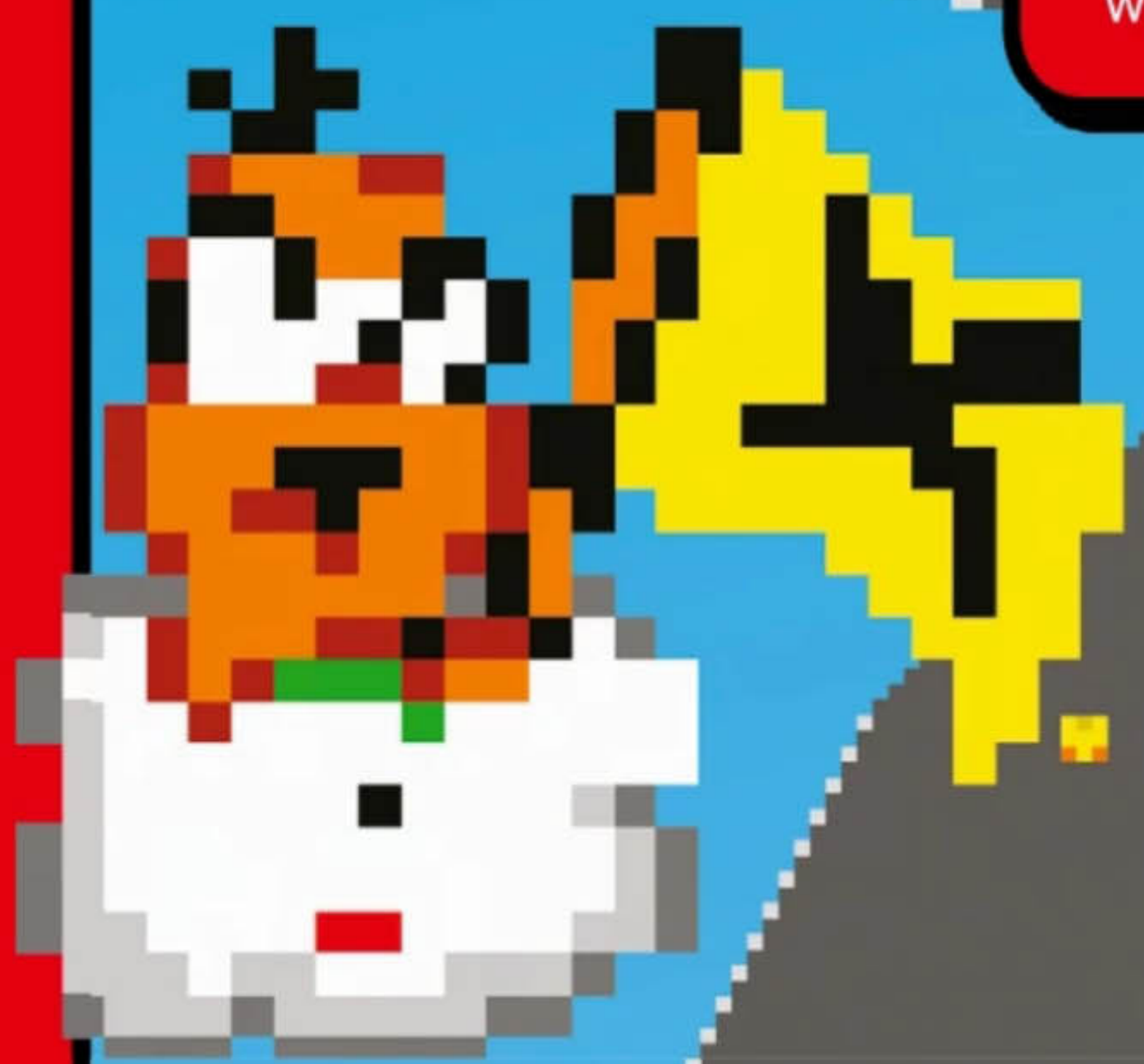
MARIO KART 8
WII U, 2014

■ The first *Mario Kart* of the HD era adds anti-gravity sections, allowing for impossible twists and loops. Bikes make their return and ATVs debut, while DLC adds representation for other Nintendo properties including *F-Zero*, *Zelda*, *Animal Crossing* and *Excitebike*.



MARIO KART 8 DELUXE
SWITCH, 2017

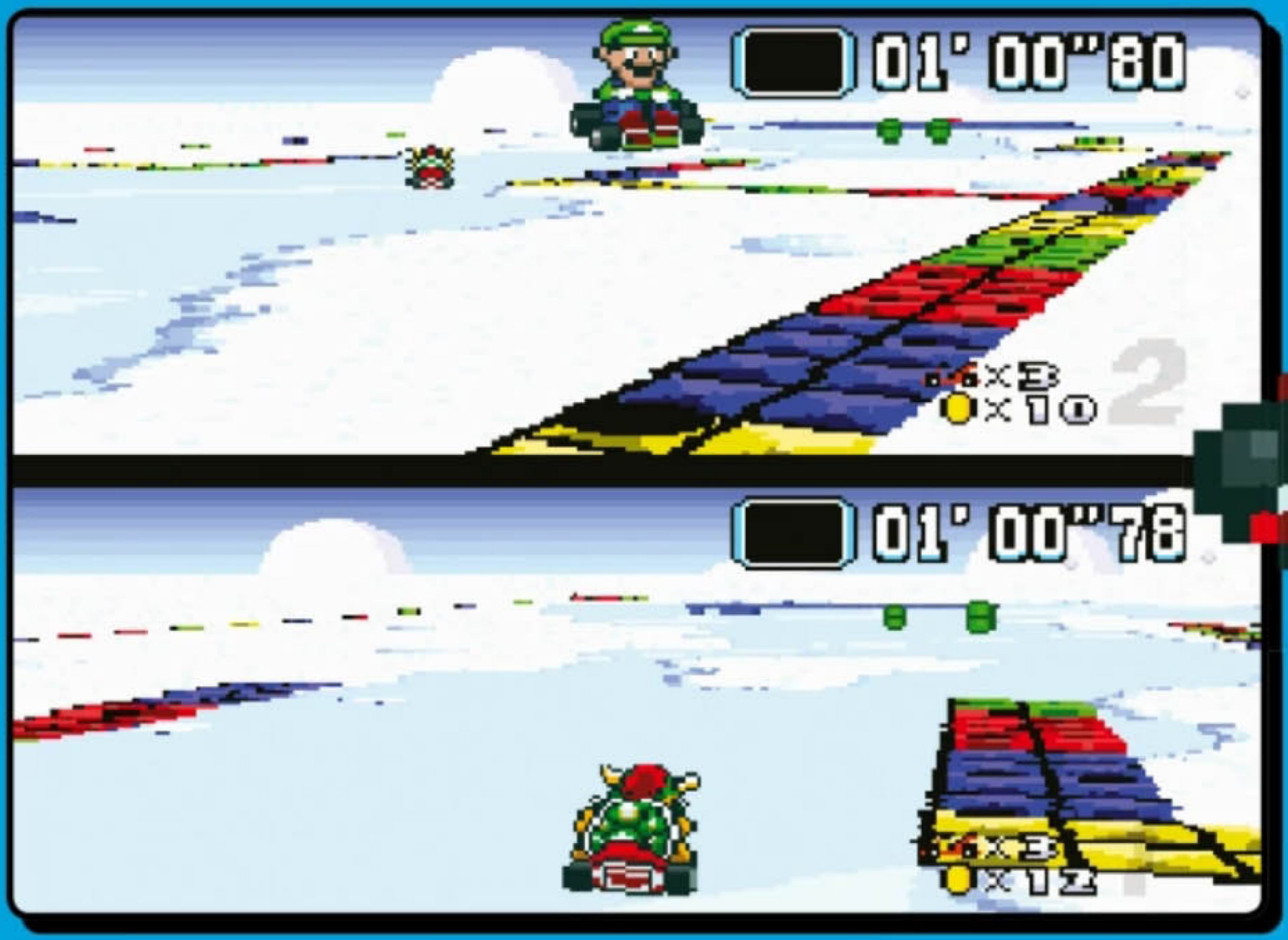
■ This enhanced version of *Mario Kart 8* includes all the Wii U version's DLC, a revamped Battle Mode with new courses including a *Splatoon*-themed arena, new characters and the ability to hold two items at once. Visuals are also upgraded to 1080p.



▶ *Super Mario Kart* wasn't just critically and commercially popular, it was influential. The kart racing formula has been copied and cloned a hundred times over by all manner of competitors, from originals like *Speed Freak* to crossovers like *Konami Krazy Racers*, as well as mascot-centric games starring Pac-Man, Bomberman, Crash Bandicoot and inevitably Sonic. However, very few have ever come close to the heights of the *Mario Kart* series – it's hard to replicate the appeal of the Mushroom Kingdom, the precise balance of items that keeps each race open, and the refined handling model that underpins *Mario Kart*.

It can certainly be argued that the *Mario Kart* series is just as beloved as the overall franchise that spawned it. What's more, it's perhaps even more valuable to Nintendo from a financial perspective. The games sell in huge numbers, and in recent years these have even eclipsed those of the acclaimed platform games – *Mario Kart Wii* sold 36.83 million copies, almost three times as many as *Super Mario Galaxy* (no slouch, at 12.72 million), and *Mario Kart 8* was the bestselling Wii U game, beating the second-placed *New Super Mario Bros U* by over 2.5 million copies.

With all that in mind, it's no exaggeration to say that *Super Mario Kart* is the most important spinoff game of all time, and nothing else even comes close. How does this feel for the developers? "I'm extremely happy, and deeply grateful that *Mario Kart* has become the series it is today, and has continued to be loved by users for so long," says Sugiyama. "I think it's thanks to the efforts of the staff, who for each new instalment work to implement new ideas and make each game feel fresh so users don't get tired of them. I hope you'll continue to look forward to new *Mario Kart* games."

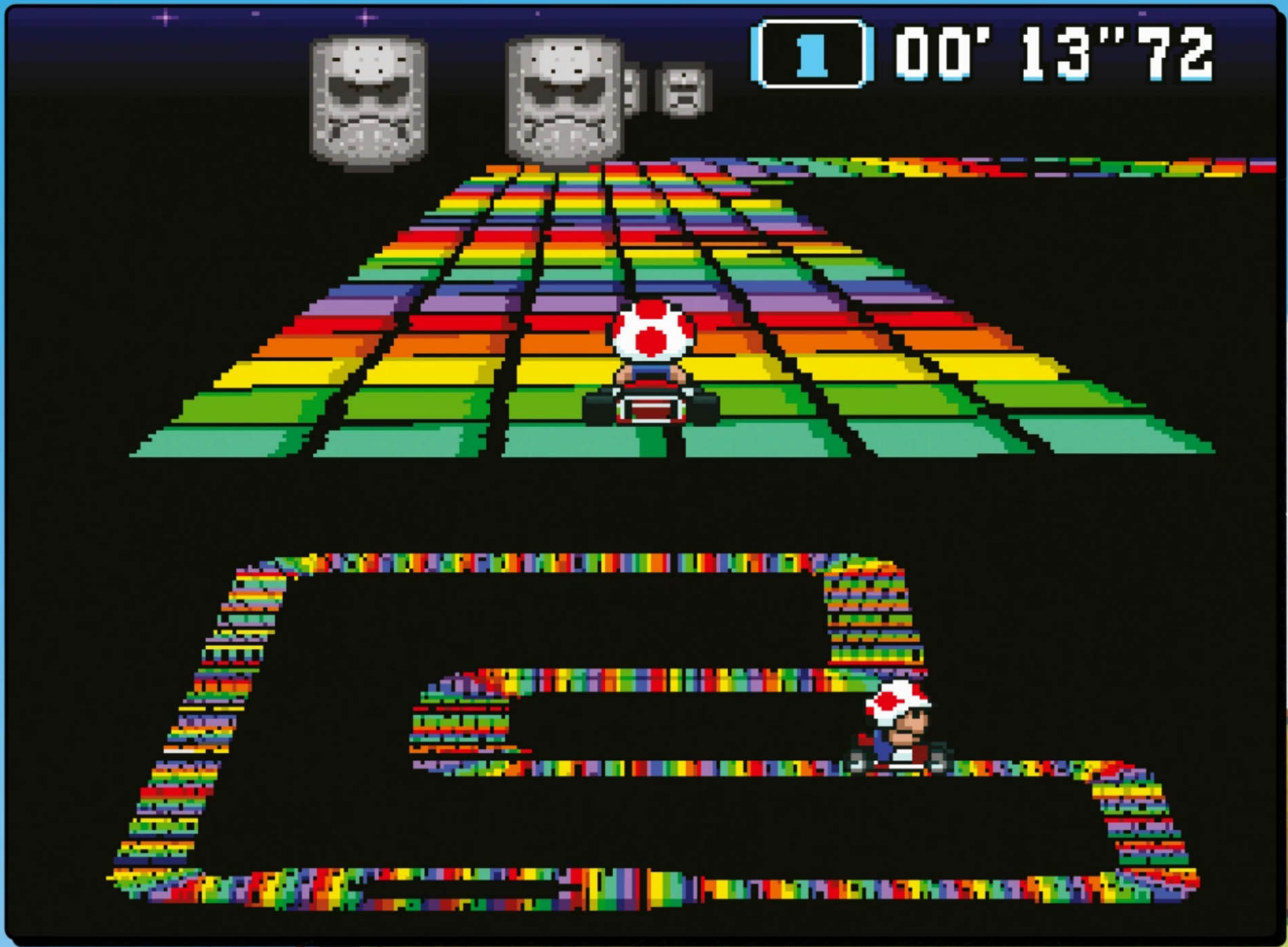


» All sorts of corner-cutting shenanigans are possible with use of the feather.

"I'm extremely happy and proud that so many people have enjoyed the game and continue to play it for so long," says Konno. "*Mario Kart* became a series of its own, where you can glide through the sky or race underwater, and in the latest instalment you can even control gravity! I'm sure more unique experiences will keep being introduced to the *Mario Kart* series so users can continue playing for years to come."

We have no doubt that players will keep coming back – they've embraced *Mario Kart* as an evergreen series. It has managed to transcend the changing fashions of the last 25 years, not to mention the varying fortunes of Nintendo's consoles, because stealing first place with a red shell feels bloody brilliant. That simple truth means that *Super Mario Kart* and its successors will always have an audience.

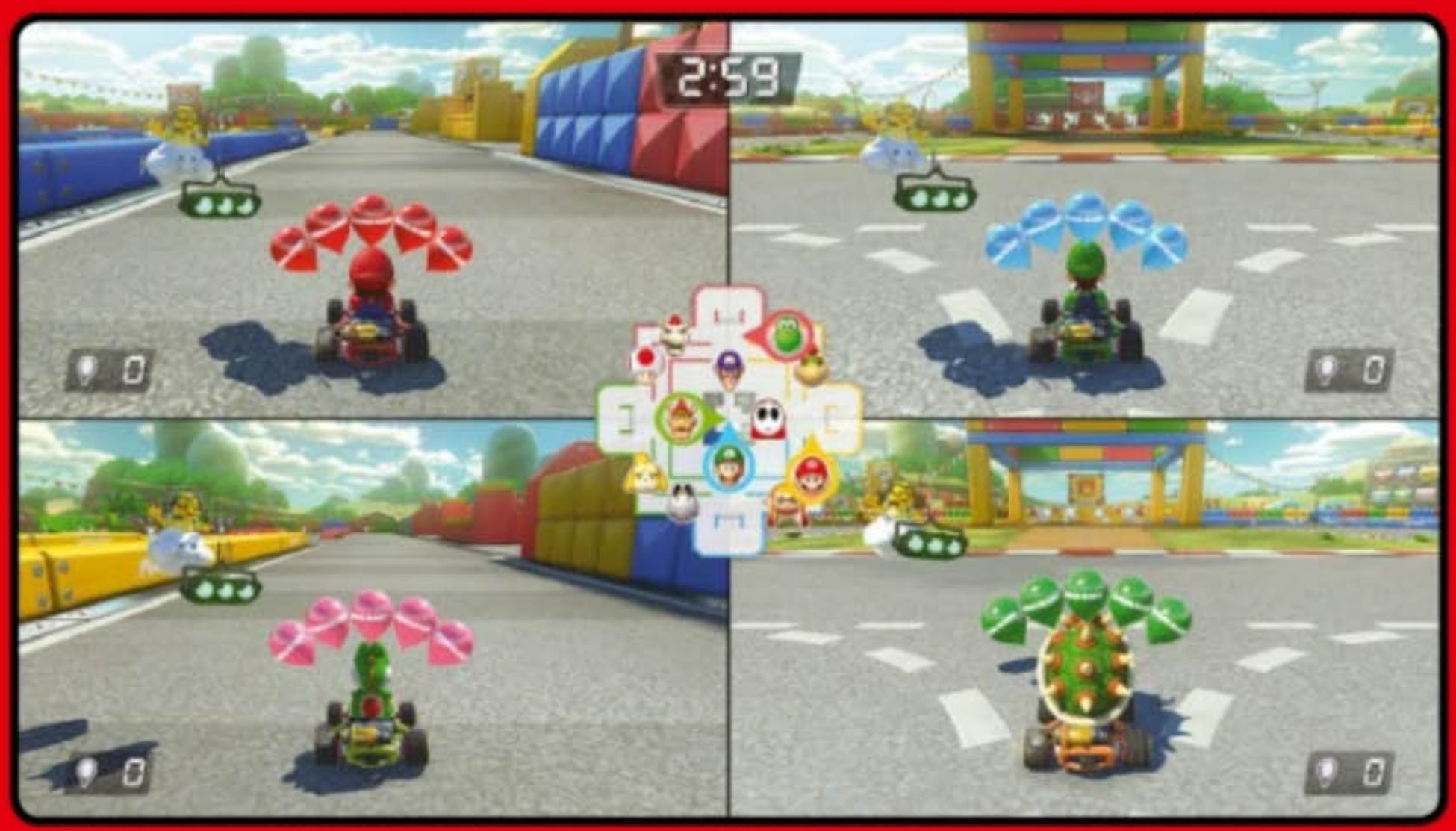
Special thanks to our interviewees for answering our questions, and to Kalpesh Tailor and Emma Bunce for making this article possible.



» There's a reason Rainbow Road is the last track in the game, it's the most challenging one you'll face.

BATTLING BACK

How Super Mario Kart is influencing Mario Kart 8 Deluxe on Switch



» [Switch] The DNA from the original *Super Mario Kart* is still clear in the franchise's most recent outing.

Sometimes, you don't know what you have until it's gone – and that's certainly true for many elements of the original *Super Mario Kart*, which have come and gone over the years. Character-specific items and collectable coins were both omitted from *Mario Kart 64* but later returned to the series, and *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe* is bringing back more SNES-era features that have been missing as of late.

With the original Wii U version of *Mario Kart 8*, the biggest complaint that many had was the omission of the classic Battle Mode, a feature which originated on the SNES. Instead of being able to roam around specially-designed arenas that encouraged carnage and interaction, the game featured battles on regular racing tracks, a compromise which satisfied few. The good news is that SNES-style battling is back in *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe*, and a variety of retro arenas are making their return along with it, including the SNES Battle Course 1.

That's not the only returning feature, either. While Bandai Namco's arcade games have featured the Boo as an item consistently, Nintendo's *Mario Kart* games haven't done so since *Mario Kart DS*, but it's back for *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe*. Also returning is the feather, not seen since *Super Mario Kart*. This battle mode exclusive item doesn't just allow you to jump over enemy shells and banana skins – at close range it'll also let you steal another racer's balloons!

POWER
EJECT
RESET
Nintendo
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

TOP 25 SNES GAMES

Retro Gamer readers reveal their favourite ever SNES games. Find out if yours made the final cut

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
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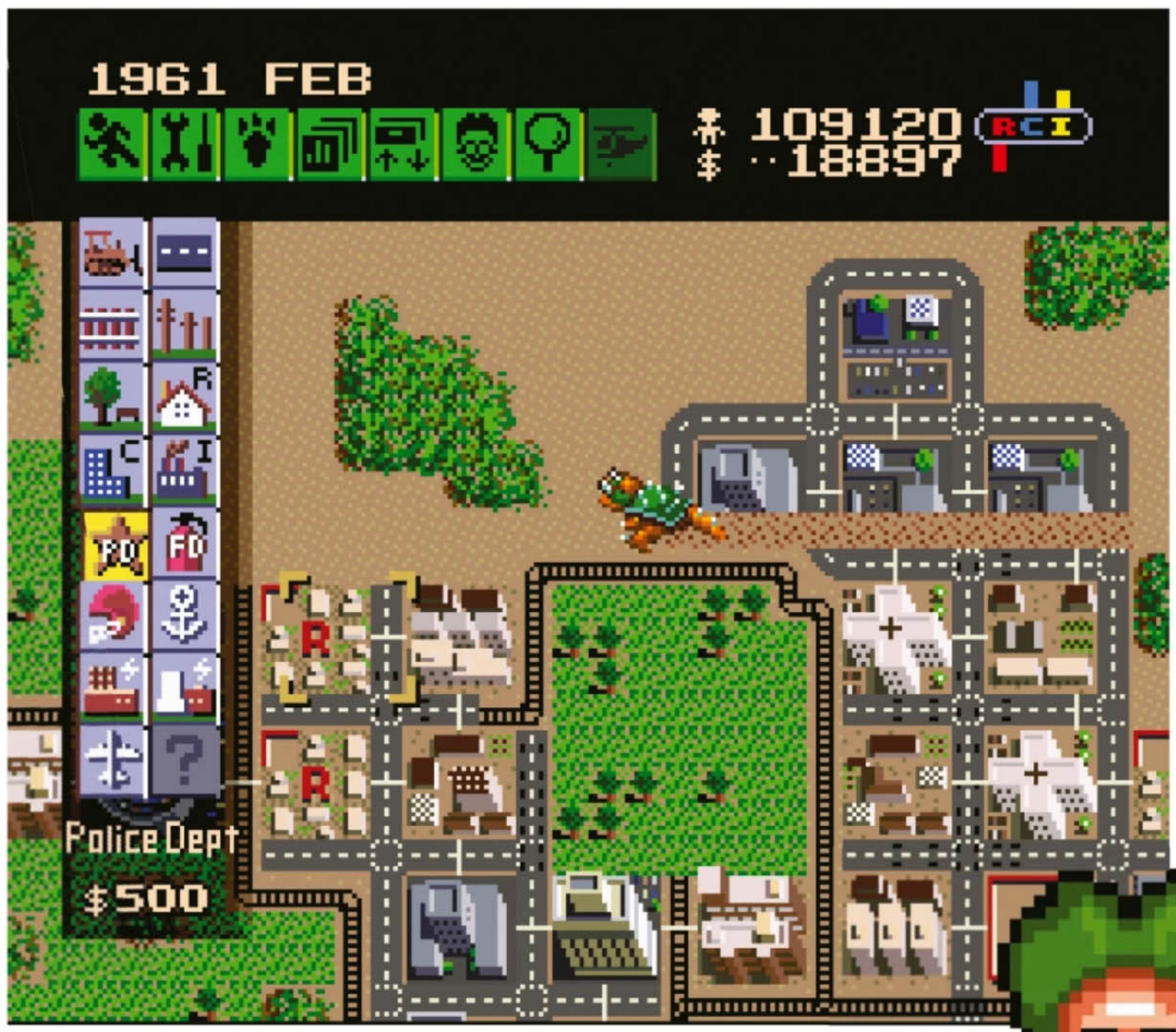
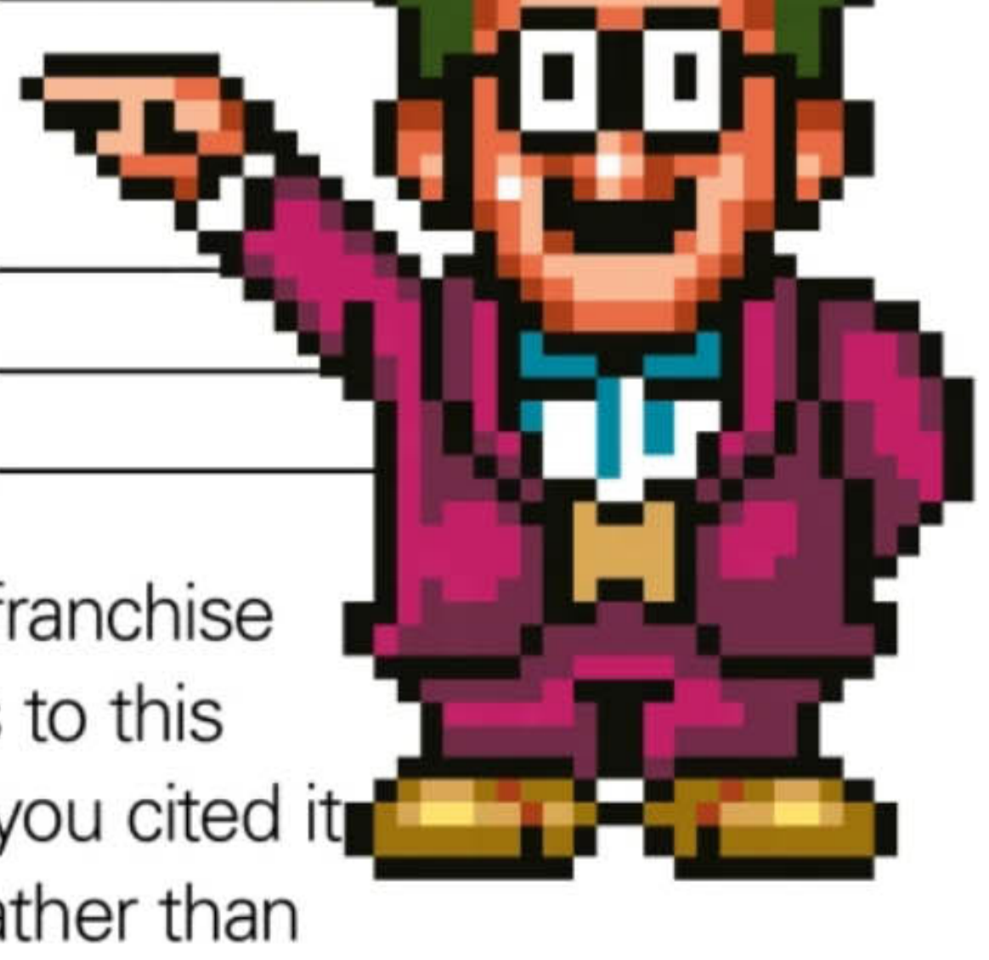




SimCity

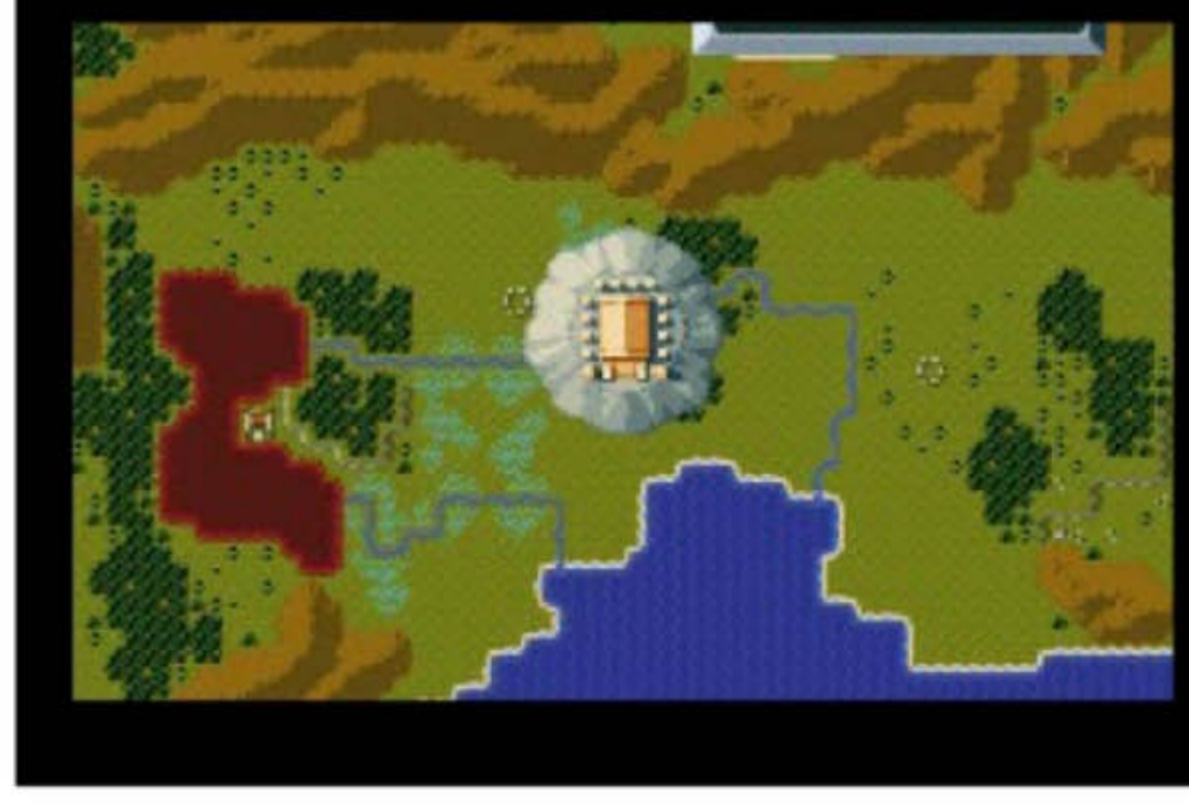
- **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD
- **YEAR:** 1991 **GENRE:** STRATEGY

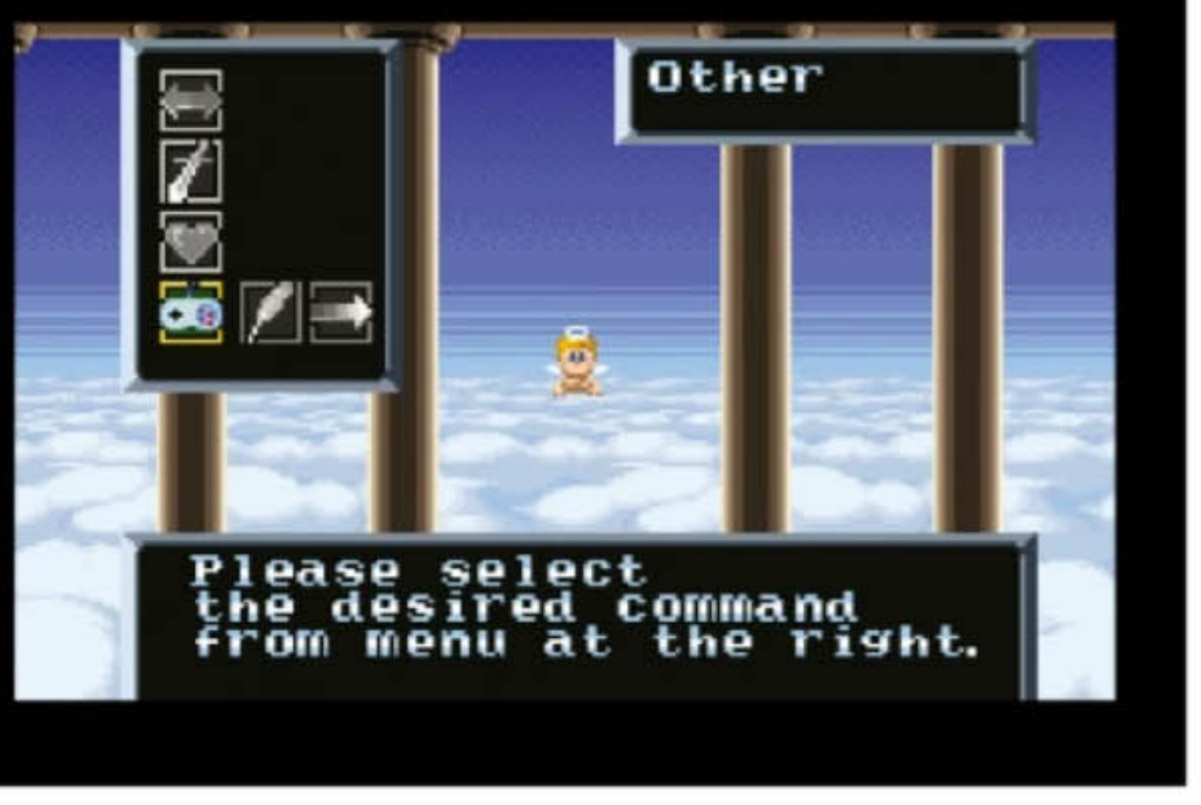
25 **It may be** primarily remembered as a PC franchise but, with numerous changes and additions to this console port, it's little wonder so many of you cited it as a SNES favourite. Developed by Nintendo EAD rather than Maxis, this version has a distinct Japanese flavour and several beautiful Nintendo twists – seeing Bowser stomp through the city is up there with the greatest gaming moments. The team did a great job of making it work with a controller rather than a mouse, too.

ActRaiser

- **DEVELOPER:** QUINTET
- **YEAR:** 1990 **GENRE:** STRATEGY/ACTION

24 **The beauty of** *ActRaiser* is that it is effectively two games in one. Half god game – albeit without any direct religious references, thanks to Nintendo's hard-line self-censorship of the time – half action game, all awesome. While it's true that neither part is a dedicated example of the genres in question, it's the unique fusion that makes this so memorable. Putting town creation and management on hold to go kick some ass is something that no other game can offer.





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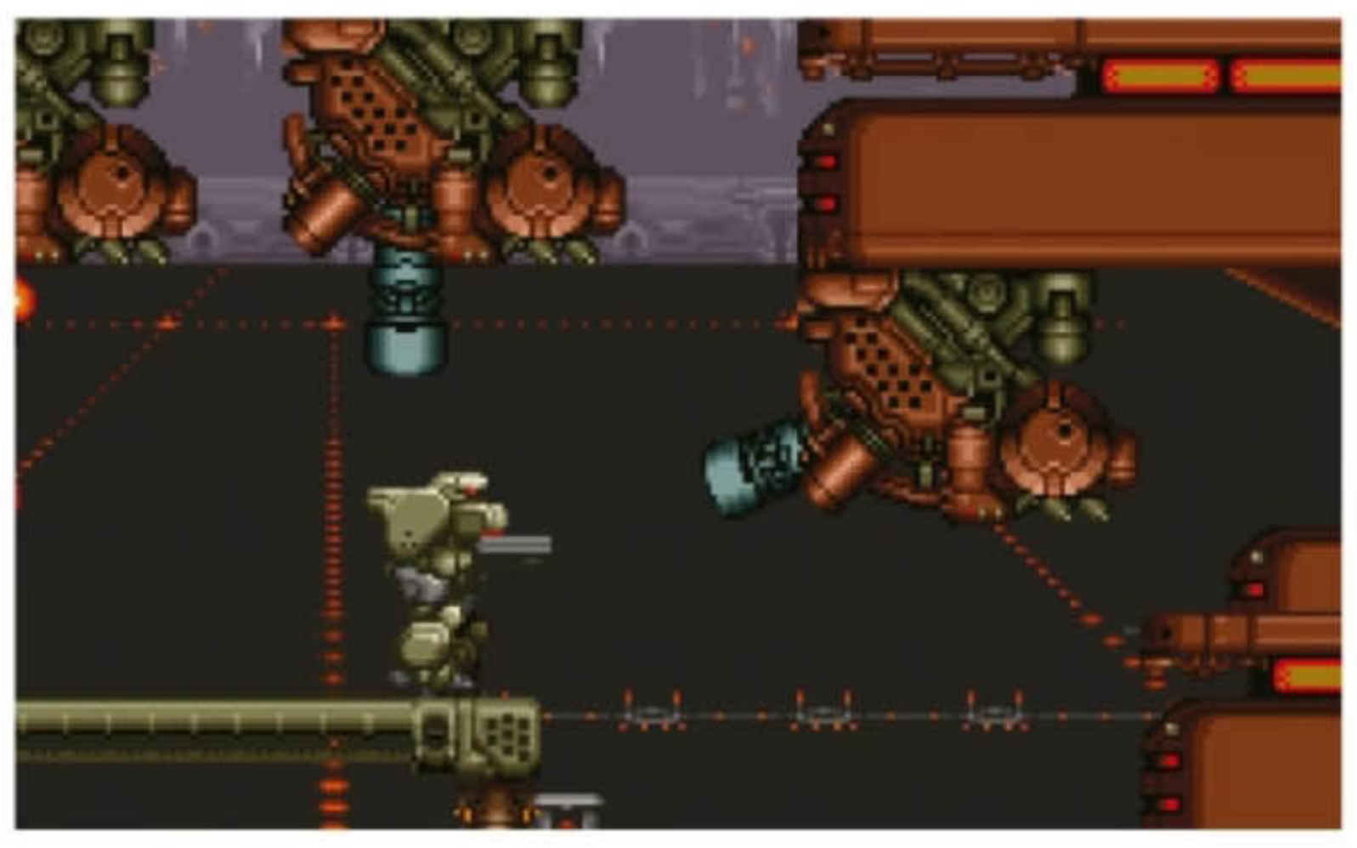
Cybernator

- **DEVELOPER:** NCS CORP
- **YEAR:** 1992 **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

23 **A surprisingly strong** showing in support of this shooter sees it make the list ahead of bona fide classics like *Super Punch-Out!*, but you've gotta love the underdog. It's an inventive mech shooter that really makes you feel like you're in control of a huge, complex piece of kit and it still holds up brilliantly today. The same can't be said of the budget PlayStation 2 remake, sadly – our advice would be to just stick with the original…



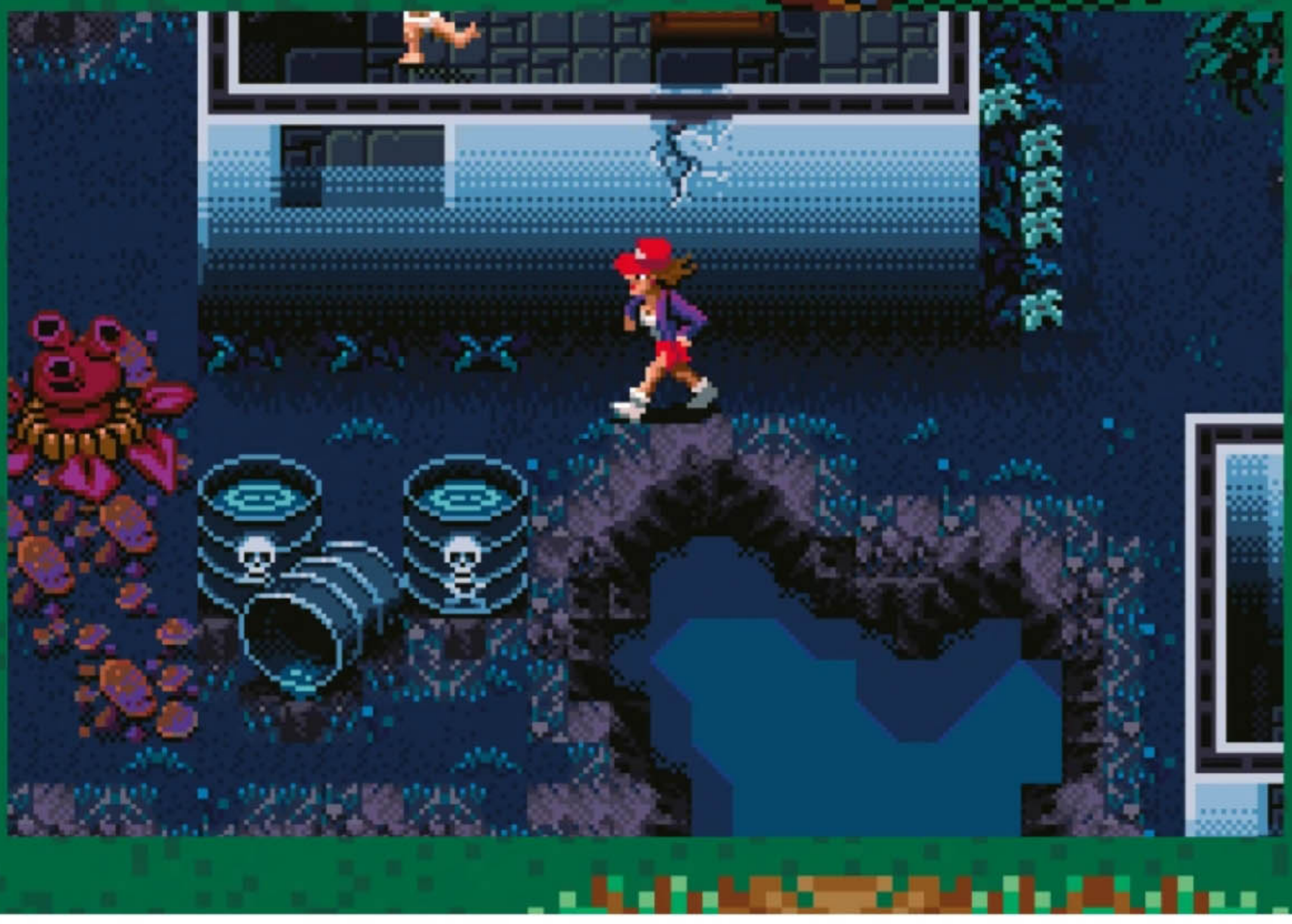
Zombies Ate My Neighbours

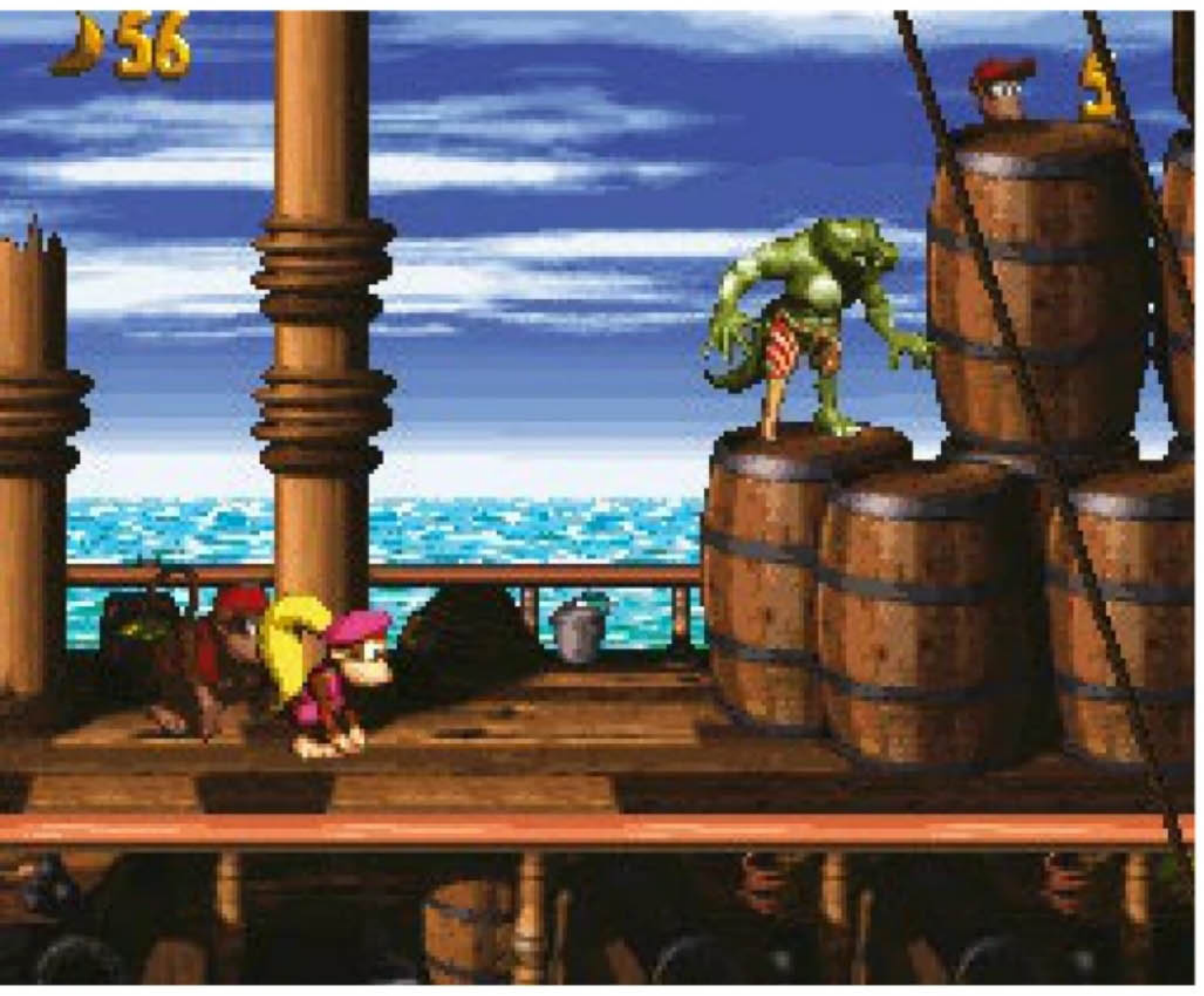
DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS
YEAR: 1993 **GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN

22 **There's a lot** to be said for this B-movie shooter, so we're not overly surprised to see you come out in numbers to support it. The recent sad loss of LucasArts might have done something to bolster its following, but it's certainly not ill-deserved – the humour, style and tight gameplay are such that many modern developers would kill to put their name to something as polished and refined as this.

Perhaps the original great co-op game, *Zombies Ate My Neighbours* lets protagonists Zeke and Julie use anything they can find to hold off the zombie apocalypse and secure the safety of the guys and gals that live down the street. But it's not just zombies – variety here is exceptional and, over the course of the game, you'll find yourself gunning down pretty much every B-movie cliché – from giant ants to vampires and aliens. But it doesn't stop there, as the level with the gigantic rampaging baby perfectly displays. It keeps you guessing by constantly changing things up – even though gameplay changes little, that each stage can feel entirely unique is amazing.

Said variety extends beyond simply switching enemy sprites out for new ones, too. It's the weapons, an improvised arsenal comprising of everything from water pistols to rocket launchers. It's the settings, myriad slices of suburbia pulled straight out of every low-budget horror movie ever made. And it's the characters – even the titular neighbours come in all shapes and forms, with each of them worth a different amount of points if you can save them in time. Thankfully, you don't need to rescue them all but, the more you manage to free, the better your score will be. And just like most games in this genre, that's all that really matters.

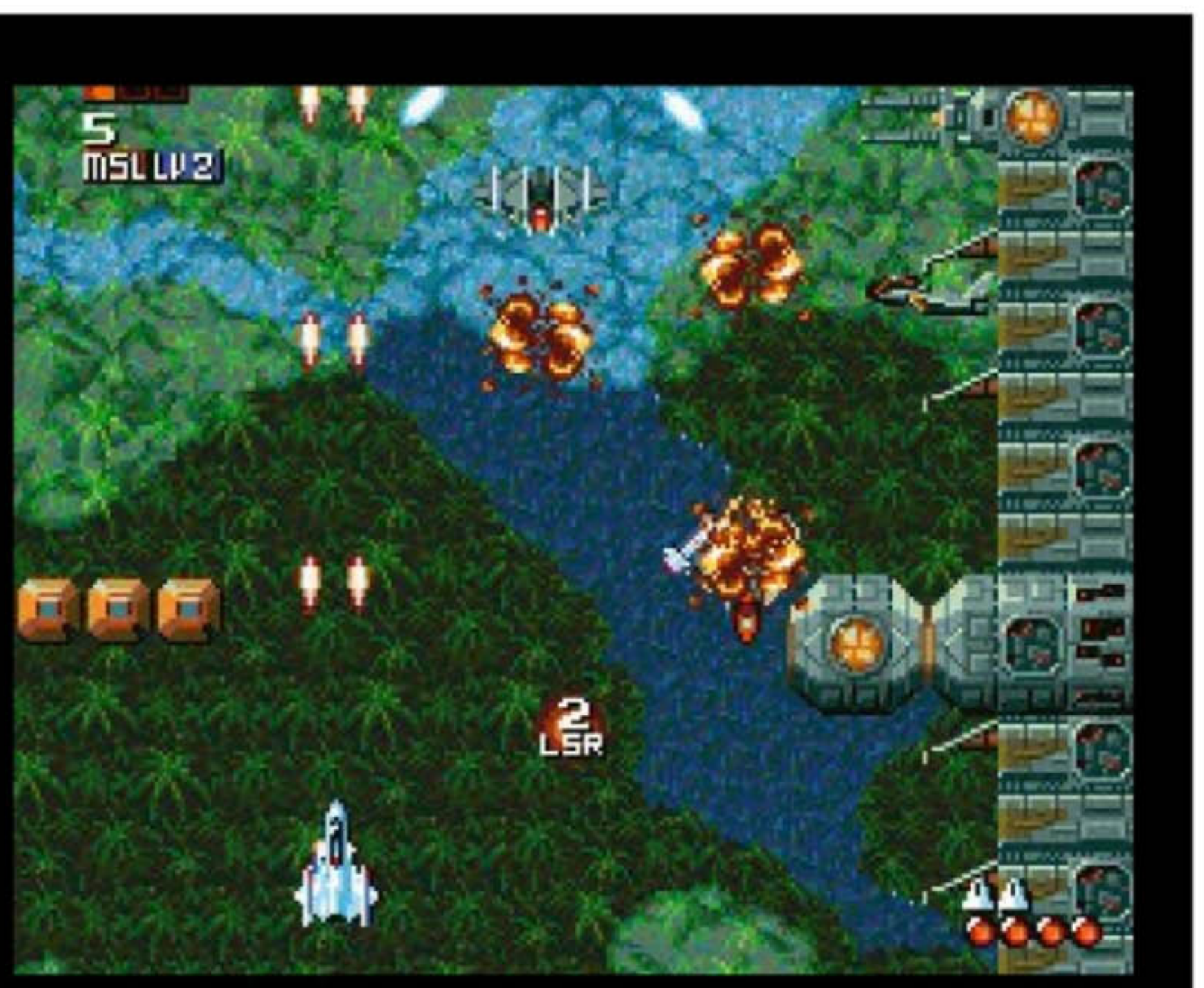




Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest

DEVELOPER: RARE
YEAR: 1995 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

21 **If you could** all have just pulled together and decided amongst yourselves which *Donkey Kong Country* game was best, it could quite easily have made the top five. Instead, divided opinion gives us two *Kong* games in this list, Rare's platform sequel just missing out on the top 20. Quite how DK came to be kidnapped in the first place is a conversation for another time, though it's clear that Diddy and Dixie can handle themselves well enough without him. It was around this point that Rare's love affair with collectibles began, so those that have enjoyed cleaning up and finding everything in the likes of *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Star Fox Adventures* would do well to recognise where it all started.



Super Aleste

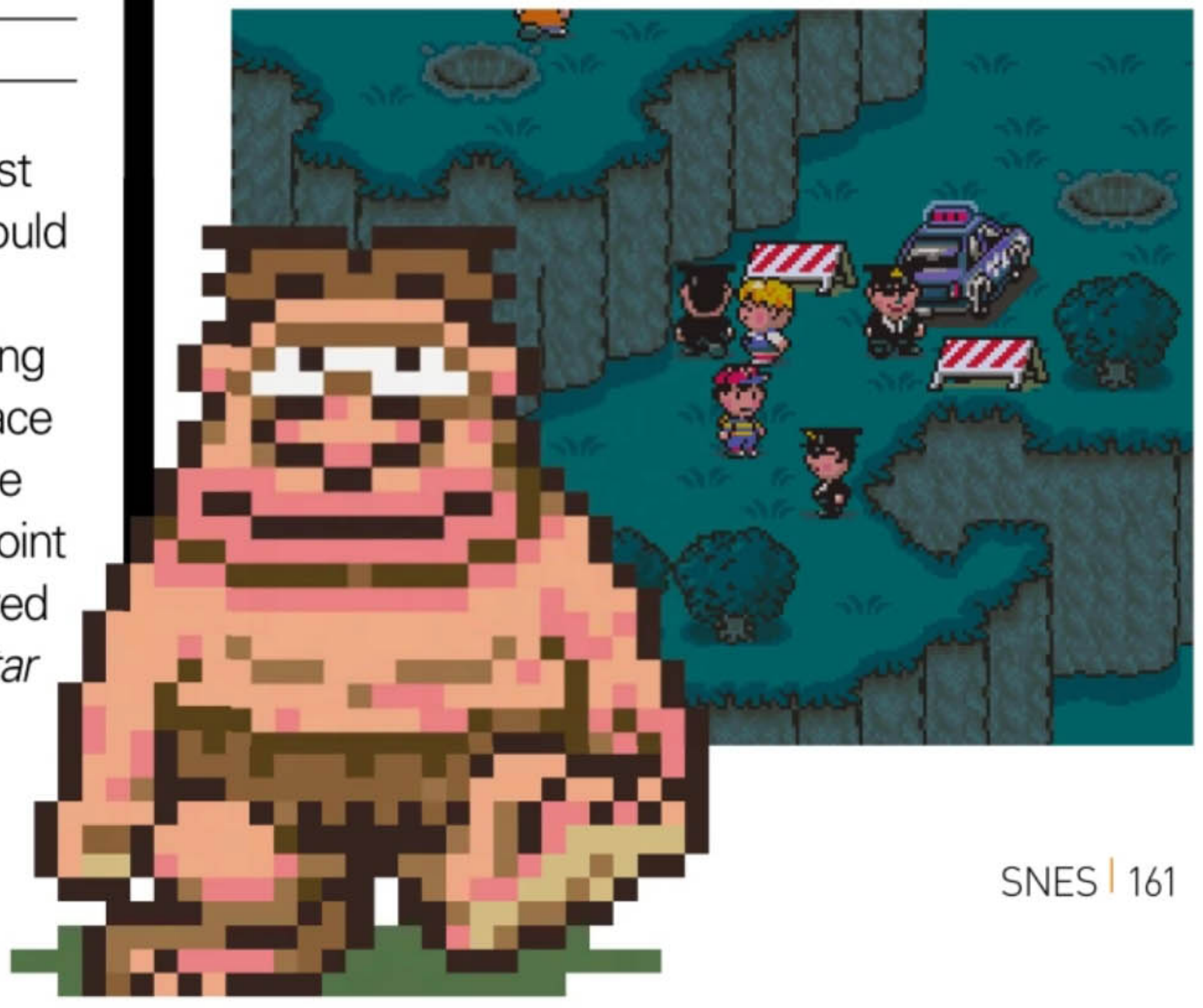
DEVELOPER: COMPILE
YEAR: 1992 **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

20 **An excellent shooter,** as evidenced by the fact that it managed to beat the likes of *Super R-Type*, *Gradius III* and *UN Squadron*. A rich and varied arsenal is what really makes *Super Aleste* stand out, each of the eight weapons offering six different levels of power. Furthermore, each can be modified at the touch of a button, adding reverse fire (or similar area coverage) or changing properties to give options that can more or less cover every situation the game throws at you. Like pretty much every shooter, there's a problem in that death causes you to respawn with virtually no firepower – but there's a simple solution to that problem: just be better at the game. Solved.

EarthBound

DEVELOPER: APE/HAL LABORATORY
YEAR: 1994 **GENRE:** RPG

19 **It may not** have had a UK release, but that seems to have had little impact on the popularity of this glorious RPG. Perhaps offered a little more exposure thanks to Ness's appearance in *Super Smash Bros*, this quirky little title can take pride of place in any collection – mint originals now change hands for upwards of 500 quid. Why? It's one of the few retro classics not to have seen a re-release in any form, despite constant calls for it to come to Virtual Console. Still, all that is set to change now, as the cult RPG has finally been released on Nintendo's digital service. Let's see if that does anything to the insane price that original copies currently go for…



Super Mario All-Stars

🟥 **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD

🟩 **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993 🟦 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

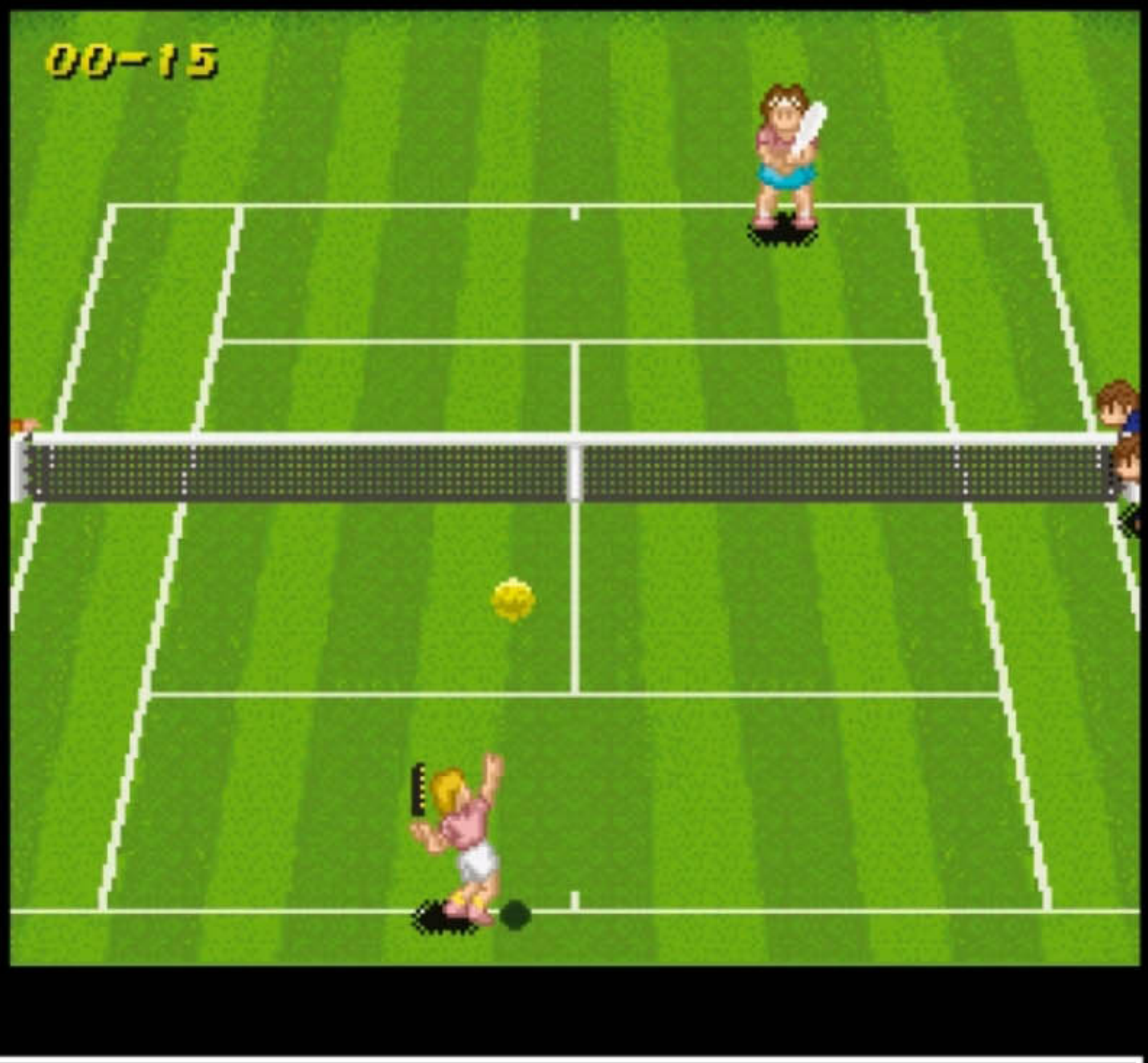
18 **A compilation and** console bundle title it may be, but far be it from that to exclude this collection of timeless games from your list. Sporting enhanced versions of the three NES *Mario* titles as well as super-tough variant *The Lost Levels* – famously *Super Mario Bros 2* in Japan, while we received a massively modified version of *Doki Doki Panic* – this is pretty much platforming heaven. Any one of the collected games would be worthy of a spot on this list alone, so the combination of all four is pretty much a shoo-in. You could buy a console and get by for months just on the single bundled game, which is not something that can be said of any console since. Later versions also included *Super Mario World*, which you can safely expect to read more about in the coming pages. Just a guess.

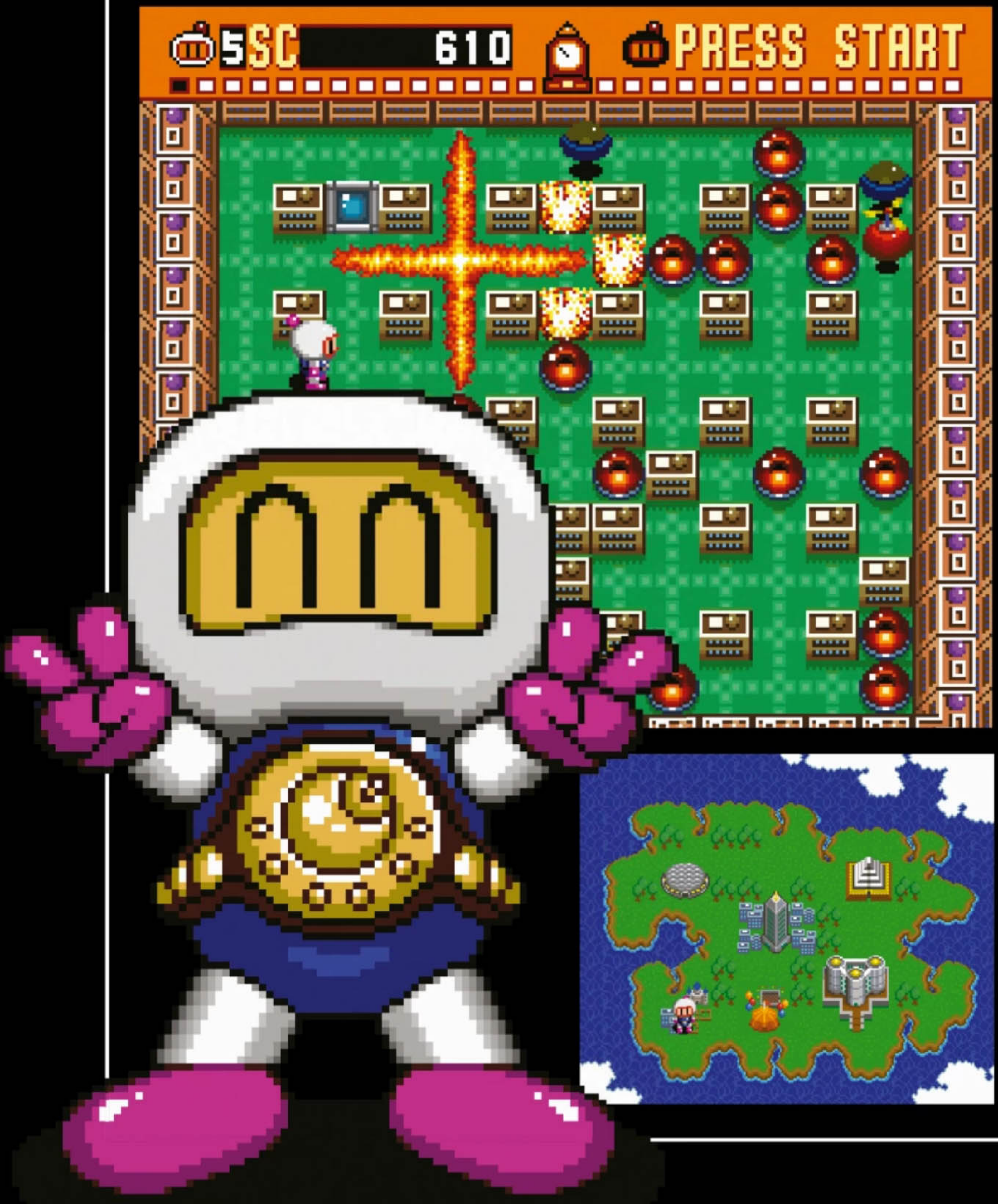
Super Tennis

🟥 **DEVELOPER:** TOKYO SHOSEKI

🟩 **YEAR RELEASED:** 1991 🟦 **GENRE:** SPORTS

17 **Early titles are** always going to live large in the hearts of fans – they're the ones that get the most play while you're waiting for the next big game, after all. We can all but assume that's why this 1991 title earned a spot on this list, although we'd struggle to point to an earlier multiplayer sports game that we got so much enjoyment out of. Making tennis quick and fun was a masterstroke, though even the points that dragged on proved to be hugely enjoyable – that's why we saw the same arcade template applied to *Smash Court Tennis* and, later, *Virtua Tennis*. We're all for simulation but, when it comes to a quick sporting thrill, we'd struggle to name many better games than this beauty. It sure as hell beats leaping around the lounge with a remote in your hand, that's for sure.





Super Bomberman

🟥 **DEVELOPER:** HUDSON SOFT

🟩 **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993 🟦 **GENRE:** ACTION

16 **Again, *Bomberman* would** be higher on this list if it weren't for the fact that gamers had no less than five different kinds of *Super* to consider in this case. Ignoring the fact that the console had just two controller ports, Konami elected to use an adorable multi-tap to allow for showdowns on a scale never before seen on console. Later games introduced more elements tailored to accommodate multiplayer massacres and, to be frank, we'd probably rather have seen one of these make the list than the simple original. However, there's a lot to be said for getting there first, and for all of you who voted for any of the superb sequels you can at least find solace in the fact that the little bobble-headed murderer managed to get onto the list at all. And we're glad he did – there are few better tests of pure gaming skill than a *Bomberman* face-off. Quite how this franchise wound up entertaining kart racers and sports games we'll never know – it remains one of the best and purest multiplayer experiences in the entirety of gaming.

Donkey Kong Country

🟥 **DEVELOPER:** RARE

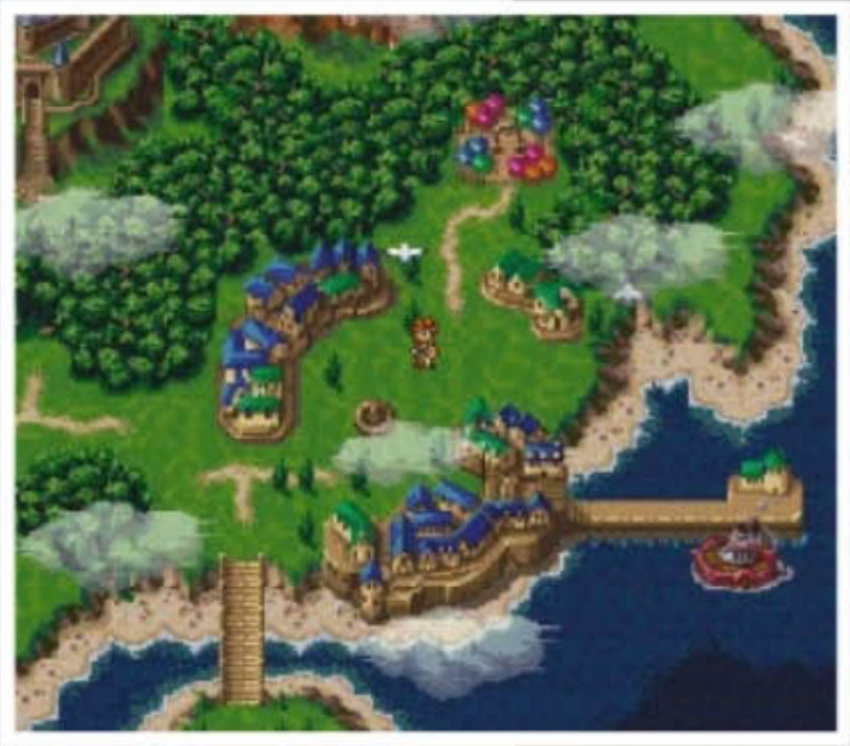
🟩 **YEAR:** 1994 🟦 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

15 **Poor old Retro.** As much as it tried its best to recapture the magic of the originals, in essence it's just not the same – the music, the design and the well judged level of difficulty were all nailed the first time around. A stunning effort by Rare.

Chrono Trigger

🟥 **DEVELOPER:** SQUARE

🟩 **YEAR:** 1995 🟦 **GENRE:** RPG



14 **As if this** time-hopping RPG classic wasn't going to make this list. *As if.* Any game that stars a noble frog warrior is one that we fully support, so we'll take any excuse we can get to celebrate this wonderful action-RPG from Square's archives.

Star Fox

🟥 **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD/ARGONAUT SOFTWARE 🟩 **YEAR:** 1993

🟦 **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

SHIELD
C-C-CLEAR OUT, ASTRO-GEEKS!!

13 **This is more** than deserving of recognition for its introduction of useless gaming baggage Slippy Toad alone. It's just a shame that its pioneering 3D visuals will forever take a back seat due to the 'do a barrel roll' meme it spawned.

Final Fantasy VI

🟥 **DEVELOPER:** SQUARE

🟩 **YEAR:** 1994 🟦 **GENRE:** RPG

Guard
?????
WEDGE
VICKS
55
68
64

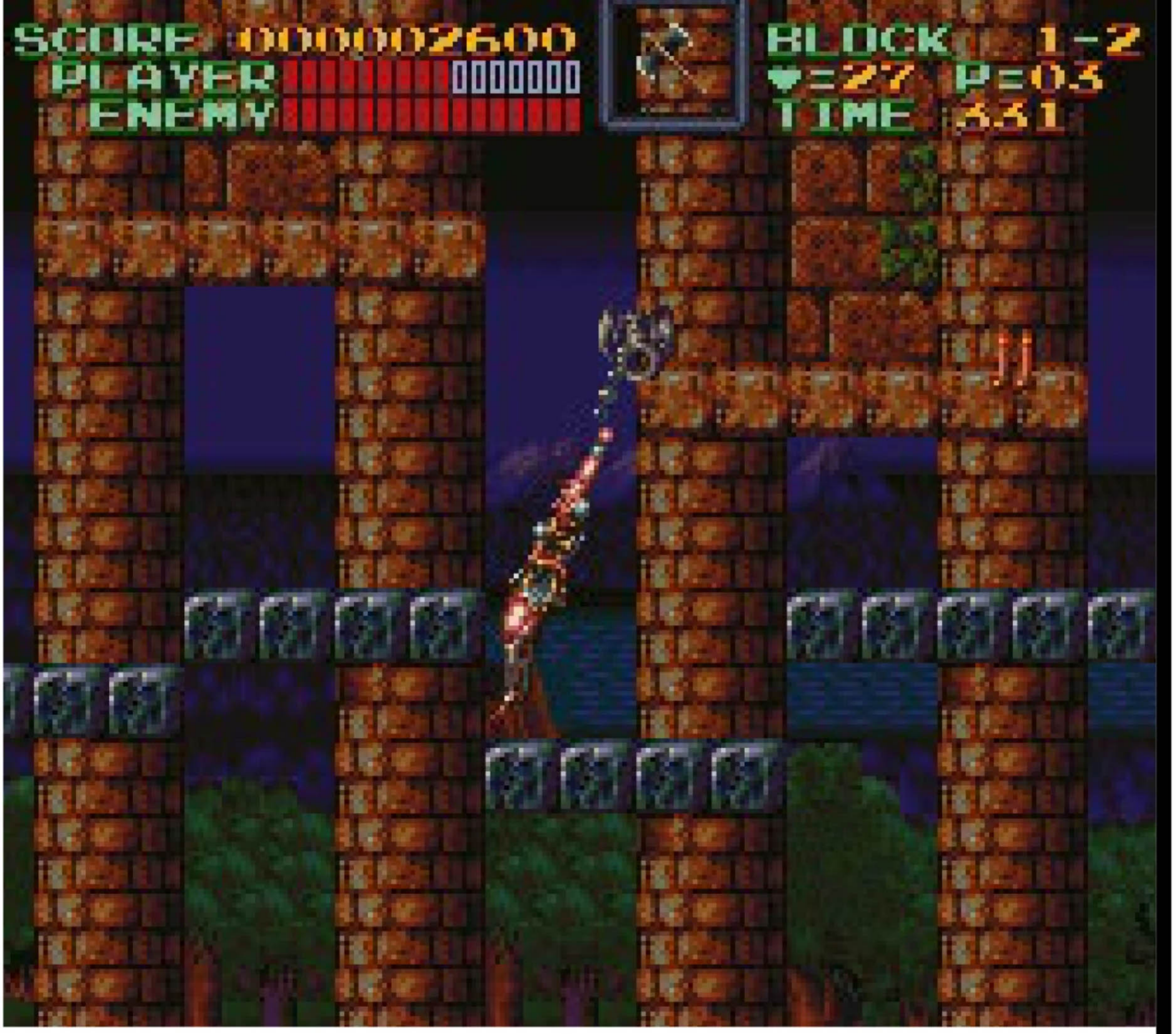
12 **Picking just one** of Square's 16-bit *Final Fantasy* games is a near-impossible choice, so well done for settling on this one. Echoes of *FFVI* can be felt in every canon game since, and its Uematsu soundtrack is enough to secure it a place on this rundown alone.

F-Zero

🟥 **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD

🟩 **YEAR:** 1990 🟦 **GENRE:** RACING

11 **Racing games are** boring? Yeah, nice try. A futuristic setting and amazing 3D visuals made this an unforgettable experience for everyone who played it, though it's saddening that we haven't seen a new version since the exceptional *GX* on GameCube.

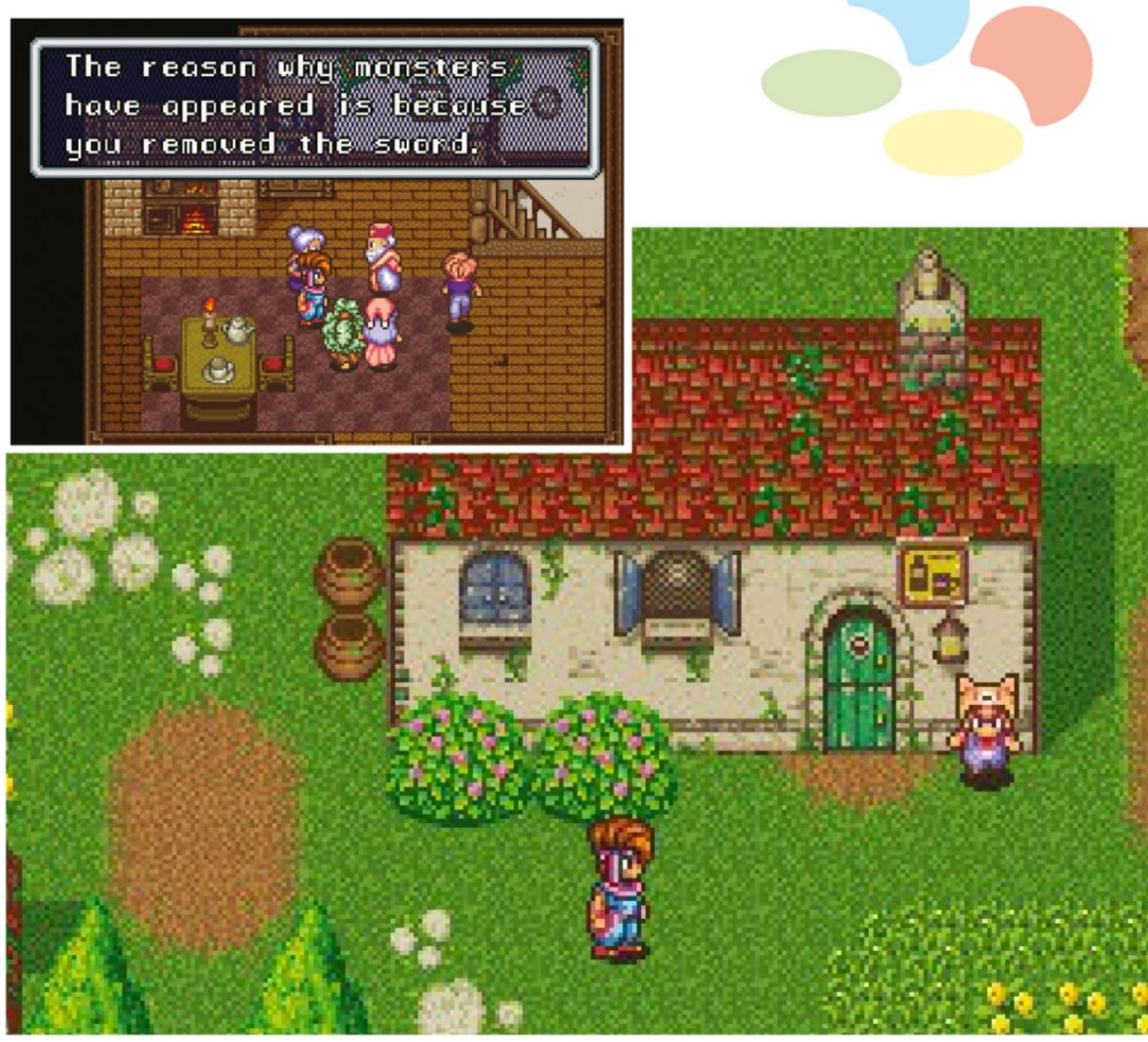


Super Castlevania IV

DEVELOPER: KONAMI

YEAR RELEASED: 1991 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

10 **Ask most people** which is their favourite *Castlevania* and, more often than not, you'll hear *Symphony Of The Night*. While the PlayStation game is a spectacular display of genre-straddling RPG action, there's a hardcore arcade purity to *Super Castlevania IV* that gives it the edge. The music, the bosses, the sheer variety… this is the stuff of legend and its reverence is far from ill-deserved. Action-platforming with a gothic slant, you could walk for miles and not find anyone who has gotten past the second level – *Dark Souls* and its ilk may claim to have created the hardcore sector, but we know better. *Castlevania* was there first. And if you can claim to have finished this, that's something that counts for a lot on your gaming CV – arcade coin-munchers have nothing on this beast.



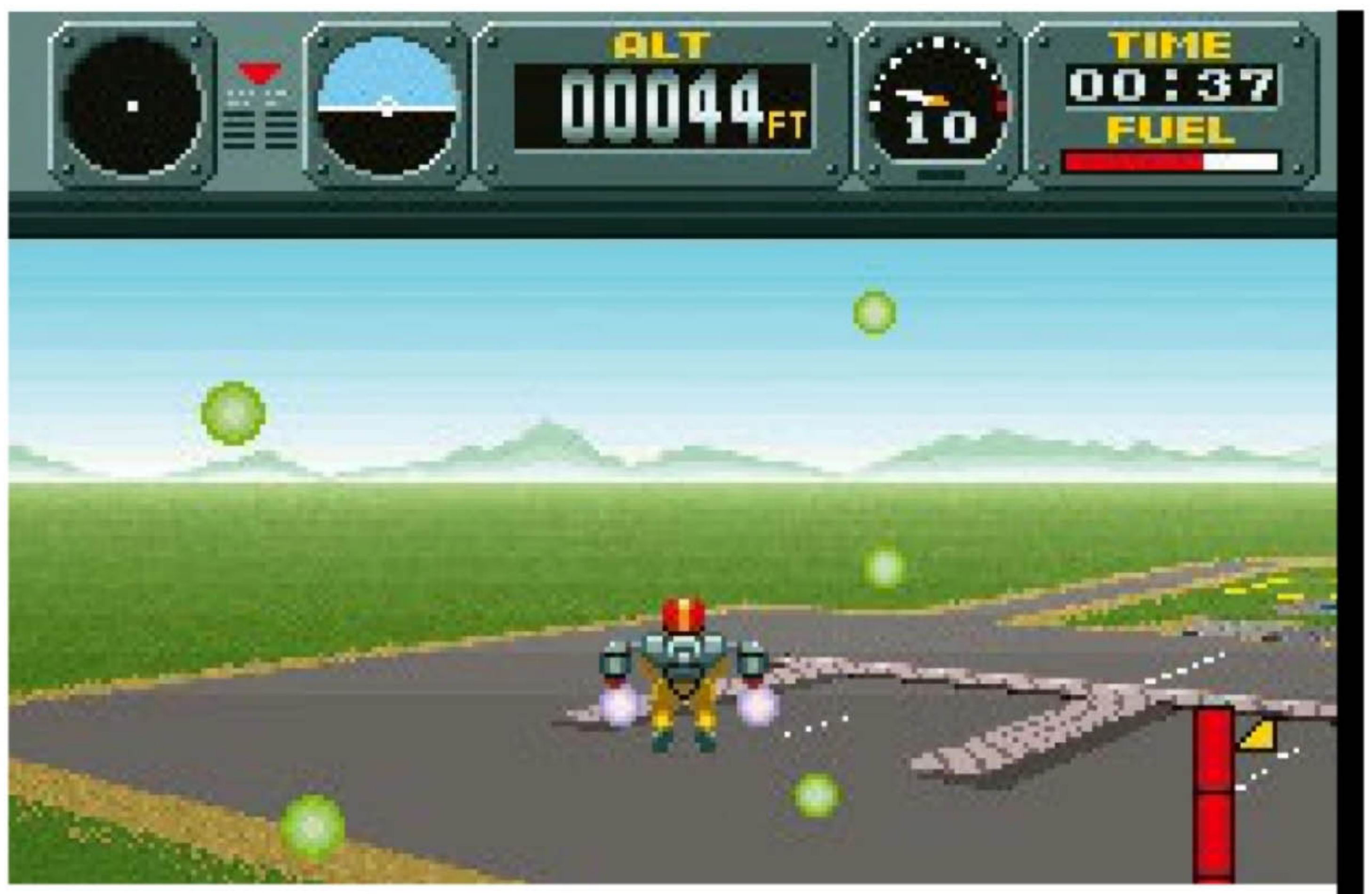
The reason why monsters have appeared is because you removed the sword.

Secret Of Mana

DEVELOPER: SQUARE

YEAR RELEASED: 1993 **GENRE:** ACTION-RPG

9 **There had to** be at least one Square RPG in the top ten and, with so many failing to get European releases, it stands to reason that this should be the one to make the cut. Three-player co-op was a unique selling point but, even without that, *Secret Of Mana* would still hold up brilliantly. This action-RPG managed to tick every box, from a unique leveling system to a great cast of characters that could be tailored to your own whim. Despite several sequels, this remains the best game in the series – the PlayStation sequel has its fans, but their numbers are feeble compared to those who would back the original. To this day, we've yet to see a truly great *Mana* follow-up and, while it's unlikely that we'll see one in this play-safe environment, it'd be a retro insta-win if Square announced a new *Mana* game tomorrow.



Pilotwings

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD

YEAR RELEASED: 1990 **GENRE:** FLIGHT SIMULATION

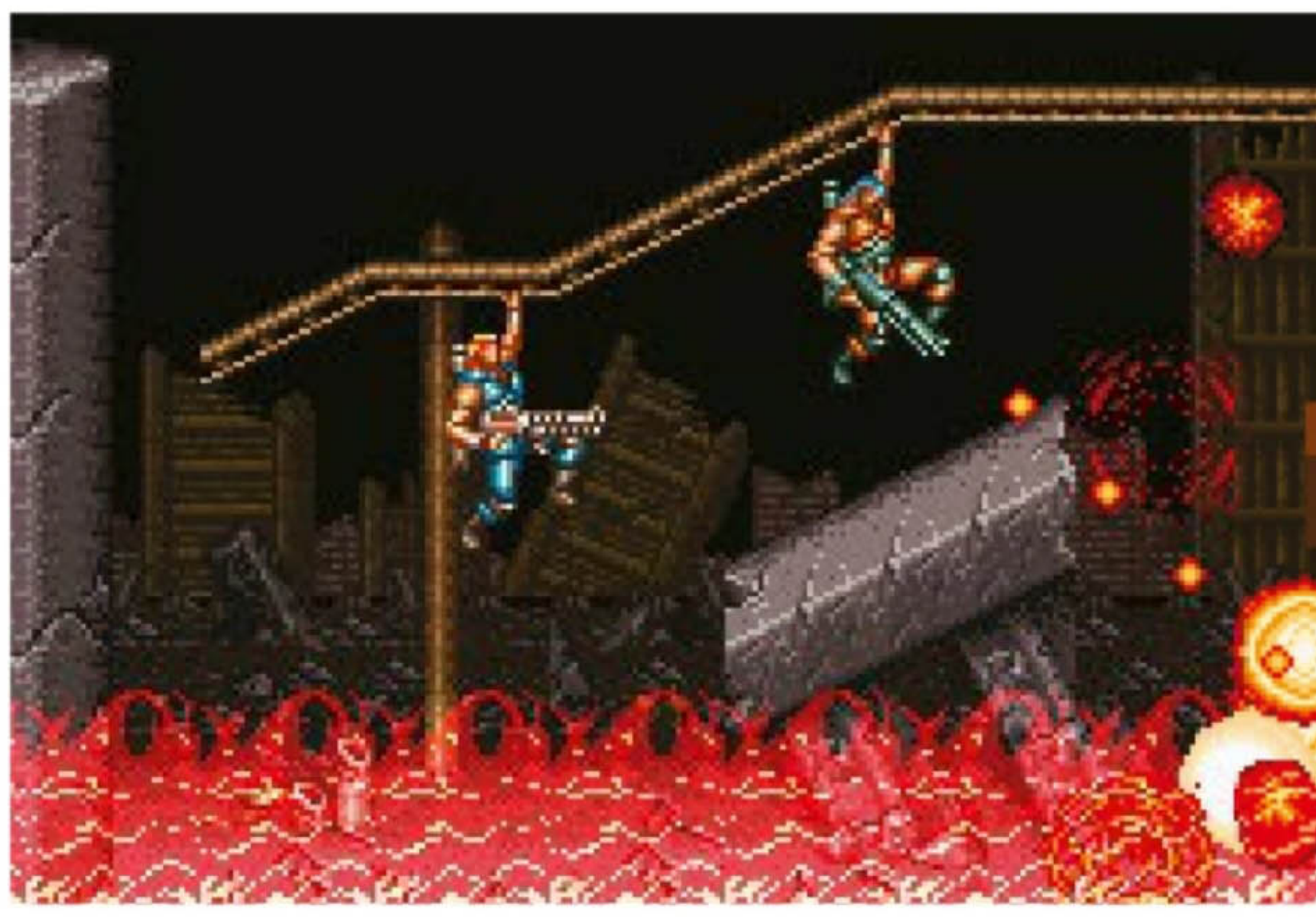
8 **Tech demos seem** to be the order of the day lately, with the likes of Wii Sports and Kinect Adventures capturing the imaginations of millions. But this beat all of them to the punch, a showcase for the unknown power of the SNES and an early glimpse at the magic of 3D. Few could have imagined that a flight game would be the one to show off what the SNES was truly capable of, but that's precisely what *Pilotwings* did. Three-dimensional gaming wouldn't become the norm until years later, but we can't forget who planted that seed – few did it better either, to be fair. In terms of offering a unique experience, few titles can rub shoulders with *Pilotwings*. Even the N64 and 3DS updates never really managed to recapture the magic of the original, fun as they may be.

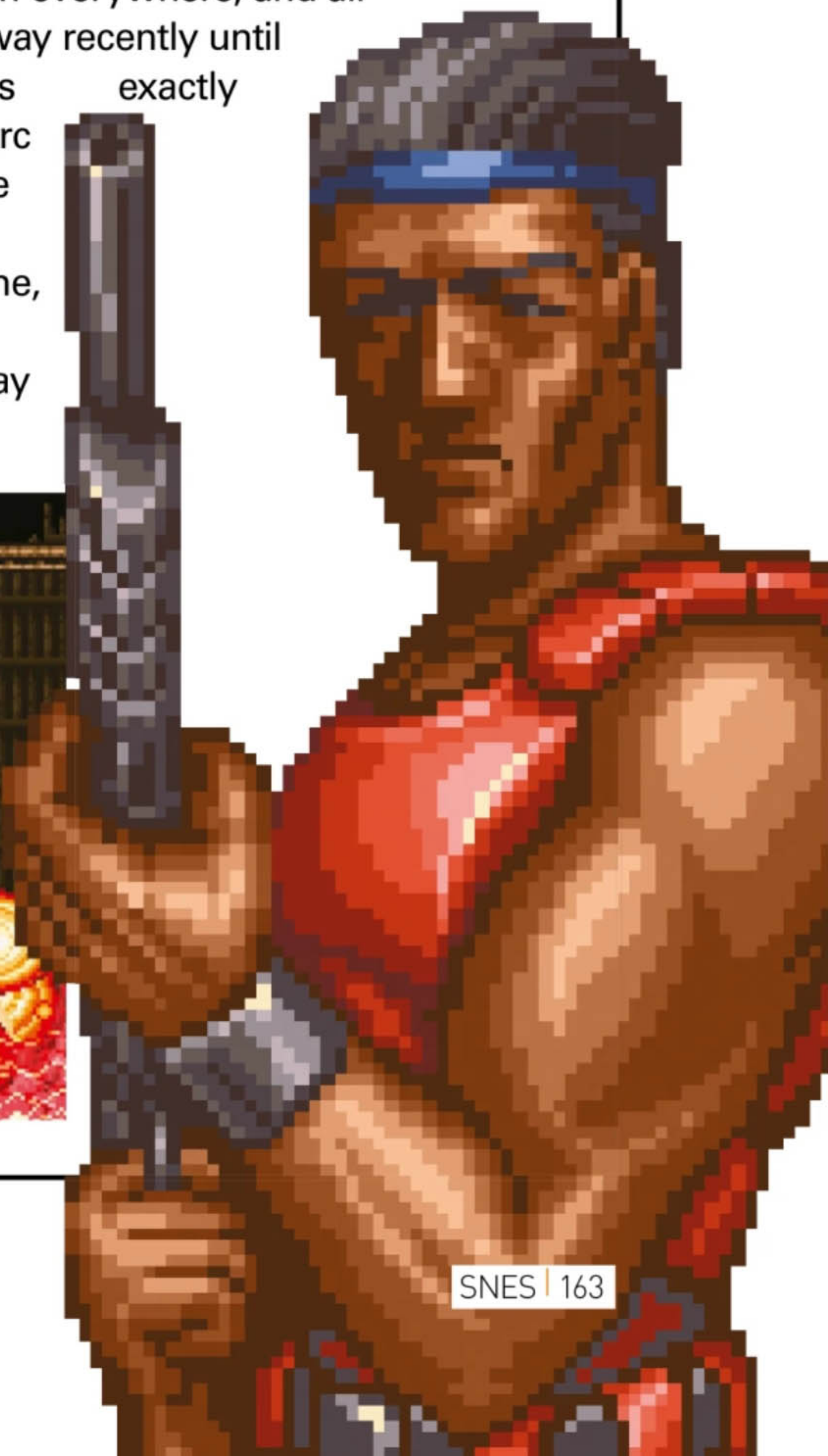
Contra III: The Alien Wars

DEVELOPER: KONAMI

YEAR RELEASED: 1992 **GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN

7 **Anyone that throws** their hardcore weight around based on recent accomplishments like finishing *Dark Souls* or *Super Meat Boy* would do well to pop back in time and give this monster a go. Whatever you choose to call it, this is pretty much the epitome of hardcore – dudes be coming from everywhere, and all of them will kill you in a single hit. *Contra* had lost its way recently until *Hard Corps* brought it back – it's rare that a sequel nails exactly what was so good about the original but that's what Arc managed to do. The original still presents an awesome challenge and one that anyone can be proud to have conquered. Pretty much the ultimate run-and-gun game, *Contra III* exists to kick the ass of anyone who tries to play it. As you probably know. If not, give it a shot today and don't even vaguely expect to win.





Super Metroid

ENERGY 99
010

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO R&D1/INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
YEAR RELEASED: 1994 **GENRE:** ACTION/ ADVENTURE

5 **Few games have** laid out their stalls quite so well as this. *Super Metroid* basically doesn't say a word, but it doesn't need to. If anything, that's the joy of it – the mystery is what keeps you playing and, even when you know what you're doing, this is not an easy world to explore. Setting the template for an entire sub-genre, this can happily claim to be one of the most influential games ever made. The recent Virtual Console Wii U re-release has given us such greats as 'Y can't Metroid crawl', cementing it as one of the great work-it-out-as-you-go-along games out there…

Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
YEAR RELEASED: 1995 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

6 **We have to** be honest – we thought this classic platformer would come in a little higher. But with *Super Mario World* stealing the majority of the vote, we guess it was a 'one or the other' mindset in most cases. Either way, this dino-themed sequel performed admirably and, while we wouldn't want to have to make a pitch as to which was the better game, the egg-tossing love this game has received pretty much does that for us. Platform games don't come much better than this, especially when they don't involve the bugs or bandicoots that have come to define the genre.

Super Mario Kart

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
YEAR RELEASED: 1992 **GENRE:** RACER

4 **Another obvious choice,** although it'd take a real Blue Shell enthusiast (there's no such thing) to claim that *Mario Kart* was a fair way to settle disputes. Still, few would argue that this wasn't one of the great multiplayer games of our time, especially in the age before the game-breaking Blue Shell came into play. Multiplayer rivalries can still be settled with this tried and tested method, although many cite more recent games – *Double Dash*, *MK7* and even the Wii version – as the best. There's no right answer… well, okay, there is. And it's not *Mario Kart 64*.

Street Fighter II Turbo

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
YEAR RELEASED: 1992 **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

3 **If you owned** a SNES and had a second controller, chances are you doubled up for the opportunity to show your mates what a Dragon Punch or a Flash Kick was. *Street Fighter* was *the* go-to competitive game at the time and, while we've since learned to play on stick, that wasn't really an option back then. Capcom did an incredible job of bringing the arcade experience home – there are few better coin-op conversions than this one and it was this kind of perfect port that made your friends with a Mega Drive incredibly jealous.

KO
62
VEGA
KEN

The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
YEAR RELEASED: 1991 **GENRE:** ACTION-RPG

2 **Arguments will rage** until the end of time as to which of Link's adventures is the best (ironically, it's *definitely* not *Link's Adventure*) but it's this seminal title and *Ocarina Of Time* that most often find themselves tussling for the top spot. While the 3D debut was unquestionably a masterpiece, it likely wouldn't have existed at all had it not been for this beautiful and surprisingly open RPG – it might have offered slightly more direction than the NES original but it still managed to feel like you were lost in a strange world with only your wits (well, those and whatever tools you could loot from dungeons) to rely on. The reveal of the Dark World ranks up there with the best gaming surprises of all time. Eat your heart out, Kojima…

LIFE
056
00
00

Super Mario World

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD **YEAR RELEASED:** 1990 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

1 **Nintendo's mascot was** always going to be a clear favourite to claim the top spot on this list, but the landslide took even those of us expecting a moustachioed number one by surprise. Mario didn't just walk this list – he grabbed a Cape Feather and flew over the top of the whole damn thing.

With *Super Mario World* appearing as a pack-in with many console bundles, this would have been the first experience of 16-bit gaming for many people. And what a way to start – it'd be like your first taste of meat being a huge T-bone steak, or your first car after passing your test being a Ferrari. This is seen by many as being as close as we've come to platforming perfection and, truth be told, we're in no position to argue. We still play *Super Mario World* regularly to this day and we're *still* discovering new tricks and secrets hidden away in the many, many stages.

There's so much to talk about in celebration of *Super Mario World* that it's difficult to know where to begin. But, we'll start as is logical – with pretty much the first thing you see when starting up the game. The map structure isn't entirely new, with *Super Mario Bros 3* pulling much the same stunt albeit broken down by level. But, it's the improved sense of scale that comes from having one big map that really makes this feel like an epic journey, and one where the route – and even the destination – aren't always clear. Find a hidden exit to a stage and you can find yourself branching out into areas far more difficult than you're used to. But, with so many routes on offer, there's no shame in returning to the beaten path in order to hurry along your journey to Bowser's castle.

Then, there's the way that each of the power-ups changes how you approach and traverse each stage. A cape will let you soar up to hidden cloud platforms if you can get the speed up to get lift in the first place, while a fire flower lets you muscle your way past many obstacles. There are even a few situational pickups (such as the one that turns Mario into a balloon) to use and abuse, though it's definitely the trusty mushroom that will see the most use. You can even keep one of these back in reserve – useful if you know you'll need it later in a tricky level and don't want to risk losing it along the way.

Whether or not there's such a thing as a perfect game is an argument that will never be won. Whether or not *Super Mario World* is the closest thing we've seen to one, though? That's not even up for debate.

MARIO
9
46
TIME
226
28
102610

What Makes It So Super

Hidden Exits

If you've got the right power-up and an explorer's spirit, there are loads of secret ways to end levels prematurely. Doing so can open up new paths that let you speed across the world map, as Star Road fans will know

Dino Might

Yoshi eggs are hidden away in many of the blocks scattered around *Mario World*, and unleashing the beast is always a joy. Not only does he offer you an extra hit, there are also certain areas that you simply can't reach without him

Perfect Design

Variety counts for a lot, though it's the fact that there's no weak link that proves the most amazing. Whether swimming, soaring, riding or climbing, *Super Mario World* never so much as misses a beat

MARIO
3
17
TIME
361
26
313550

Star Power

Soaring above the world is Star Road, a set of super-tough stages with secret exits on every one. If you know where to find the lot, you can finish the entire game in less than ten minutes

Endless Replayability

So many exits, so many routes, so many tiny little secrets to find… there's just so much to this game that, as we said, we're still finding new power-ups and hidden areas to this day. As close to the perfect platformer as you can get, basically

PAL VERSION
RESET
EJECT
POWER
ON
OFF
POWER
Nintendo
SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM™

SUPER

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
POWER
RESET
EJECT

The SNES is a great console to collect for. Follow this guide and you won't go far wrong

Nintendo
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
EJECT
RESET
1
2

» Manufacturer: Nintendo **» Models:** Super Nintendo/Super Famicom **» Launched:** 1990 **» Country of Origin:** Japan

NINTENDO

Sandros
SUPER NES CONTROLLER
Contains one Super NES Controller™ for super precision game control!
SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
PAL VERSION
Nintendo
TOTAL!
100% FOR PLAYERS OF NINTENDO
Okay, so now you've got your NINTENDO
CHRONO TRIGGER
ASTRO GO! GO!
SUPER Famicom

» It wasn't just the games that came in flimsy cardboard boxes, making anything in-tact more valuable.

WHY IT'S COLLECTABLE

Growing up in the Nineties wasn't easy. From an early age, many gamers found themselves thrown into the epicentre of a digital war between two Japanese forces to be reckoned with.

Sega and Nintendo's conflict controlled the playgrounds and workplace, *Sonic* against *Mario*. The battle continues today, as the mention of the Super Nintendo versus the Sega Mega Drive has collectors raising their control pads with pride.

Despite hosting fewer games than Sega's 16-bit offering, the SNES hosts a wealth of blockbuster hits amongst its huge library of over 500 known European releases. With the likes of *Super Mario World*, *F-Zero* and *Pilotwings* available from day one, shortly followed by *Super Mario Kart*, *Mega Man X* and *The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past*, it is no wonder that it has continued to captivate gamers to present day. However, it wasn't just about the high quality software available. Given that the gaming world had just experienced a very hard-edged and ugly selection of consoles (such as the NES and Master System), the arrival of an alluring curved console bundled with a comfortable control pad was too good to dismiss.

Where collecting is concerned, a large majority of the SNES catalogue has seen a considerable rise in value over the last few years from an influx of nostalgia-hungry gamers. But, surely these financial skirmishes taking place on auction sites are just as prominent for the Super Nintendo's 16-bit rival? Luckily, the Sega Mega Drive fans are much safer from this barrage of collectors due to one conclusive reason. Up until the Nintendo Gamecube, every game branded with the Official Nintendo Seal was released within a flimsy cardboard box. With so few mint condition boxed games available (in comparison to the near indestructible hard-cased Mega Drive games), they are highly sought after, as collectors challenge each other to replicate that brand new feeling again.

As time passed by and Mario's newest home began to build up an incredible momentum within Europe, a sporadic release schedule shortly followed and reared its ugly head. A large chunk of the rarest PAL releases originated from a single country, leaving frustrated gamers and collectors today trawling countless top-level domain variations of eBay. Of these rarities, *X Zone* (Scandinavia), *Whirlo* (Spain), *Cool World* (Spain), *Sonic Blast Man* (Spain) *Space Invaders* (Australia) and *Super Chase HQ* (Australia) tend to be the most sought after by 16-bit collectors around the world.

Although Nintendo had a wide range of multinational gamers, their hard work and dedication continued to ensure each Super Nintendo owner within Europe was catered for. Many releases were adjusted to better suit their target audiences – changes which often included alternate artwork, varying language options and occasionally 'classic' re-releases. Although this level of consideration sounds fantastic, those aiming to collect SNES variants face countless headaches due to the sheer volume of releases out there. *Super Mario World* is an extreme example of this, given its seventeen variants.

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
X
A
Y
B
SELECT
START

» The U.S. Super Nintendo pad dispensed with the bright colours of its PAL and Japanese counterparts.

DID YOU KNOW?

■ No matter how fondly you remember the aesthetic curves of the Super Nintendo console, a more minuscule and desirable iteration left the production line at Nintendo HQ. Dubbed the SNES Mini or SNES Jr, the redesigned console was released in both America and Japan for the low cost of $99.99 bundled with a pack-in game. While the baby-sized console never made its way to Europe, it remains a frequent purchase by those who missed out, but with a pinch of hesitation. In the most unusual case imaginable, the SNES Jr has been a victim of near perfect fakes arising on eBay over the years.

TRI-STAR
8 BIT ADAPTOR FOR SNES™
PAL VERSION
TRI-STAR
Allows You to Play The Latest 8-Bit Games on Your Snes™
Simply Plug into Your Snes™
NO. F-012

» There is quite a difference between Western and Japanese box art. Which you prefer is a matter of taste.

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
KIRBY'S GHOST TRAP
KONAMI
Nintendo
KIRBY'S

» Special edition cases were rare. If only they all came in metal tins, there would be a lot more complete packages today.

STREET FIGHTER II TURBO
CAPCOM
Nintendo
CAPCOM
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION

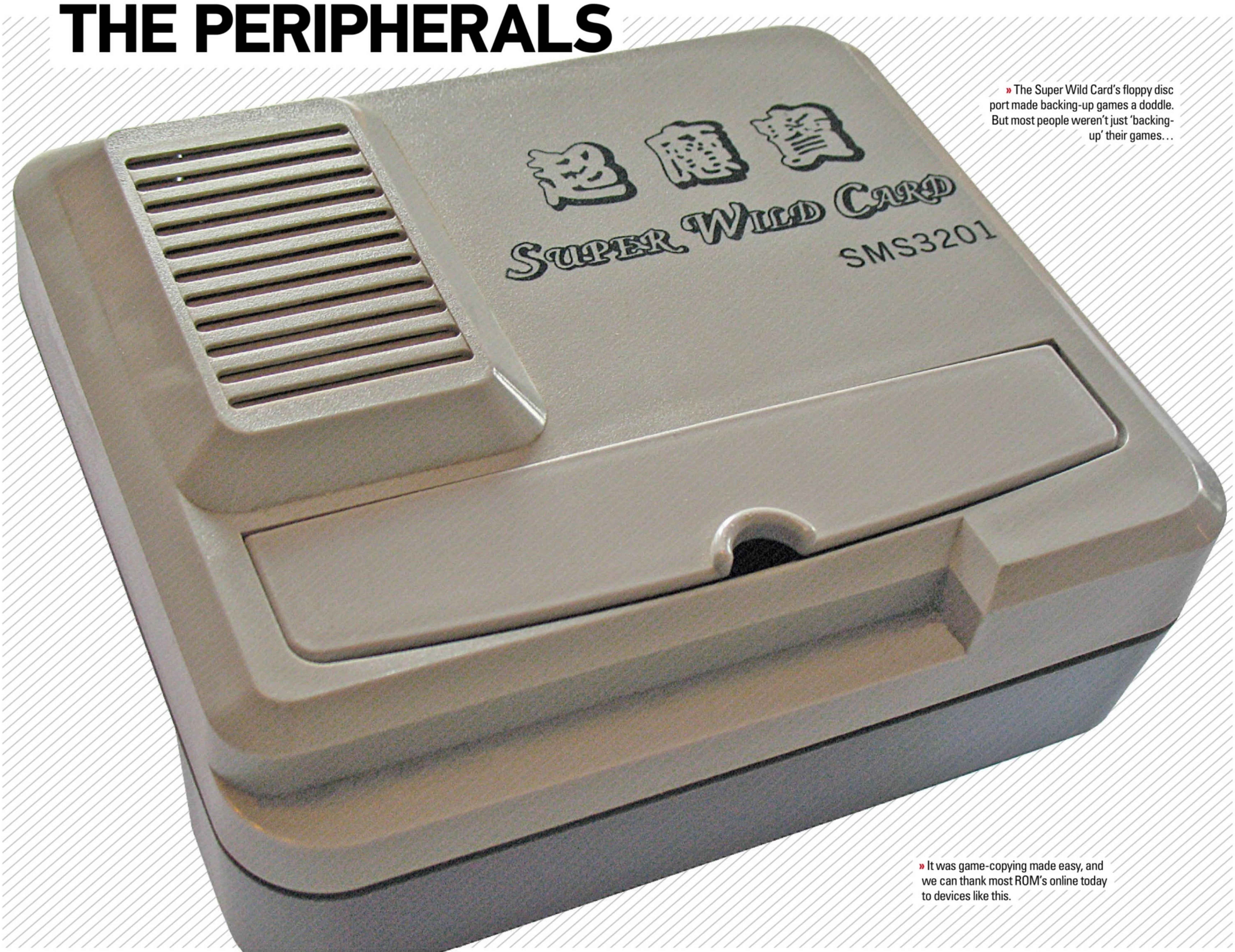
Complications aside, the Japanese and American release lists offered a much larger library of games, yet there was still a selection of prominent European releases which have gamers from across the pond intrigued. The most notable is the timeless Japanese RPG *Terranigma*, which for some untold reason saw a European localisation, yet nothing for gamers stateside. Auction snipers worldwide sit in wait for each and every time it surfaces, sadly driving the price up. *Whirlo*, *The Firemen* and *Super Bomberman 3* are other good examples of this, as European gamers often struggle to hold onto their hidden treasures.

One of the more interesting aspects to note during the 16-bit era, was how easy import games were to acquire. While the price tags within magazine adverts suggested that early arrivals of Japanese and American software were probably worth being patient for, there was one publication which almost justified these financial kidnappings. Simply known as *Super Play*, it is often referred to as the greatest gaming magazine of all time, due to its perfect combination of covering games and Japanese culture. As it focused mainly on imported titles months before their European release, a new wave of gamers were born unhappy with what their home country could offer. These disgruntled fans were often found excusing themselves as they happily paid premium prices to get their latest gaming hit way ahead of schedule. Whilst these purchases could often be expensive gambles, many of these investments have paid off, as gamers obtained classics such as *Earthbound*, *Final Fantasy III* (*VI*) and *Chrono Trigger* which never arrived in Europe. However, what they were unable to see at the time is how many of these exclusive imports would eventually fetch three figure sums, as they do today.

With such an enticement from abroad, often limited by how far our distressed wallets could be stretched, Super Nintendo fans were left questioning how they could enjoy the wealth of cartridges without skipping meals. Quite naturally, the black market was well aware of this fact and began to envision various ways to profiteer from the 16-bit juggernaut. While very few bootlegs found their way underneath the counter of less honest shops, the pirates had another device at the ready to potentially make the expensive cartridge medium a thing of the past. Given that a large majority of early cartridges could fit onto a single floppy disk, a disk drive was placed inside a Super Nintendo compatible device known as the Super Wild Card. Capable of backing up and loading cartridges from disk, this revolutionary and attractive piece of kit made stealing games all too easy. While there are more modern alternatives to this hardware, the Super Wild Card range and various other similar devices still get snapped up rather quickly due to their elusive nature.

Offering countless games spanning multiple regions and an array of diverse accessories, the Super Nintendo is by far one of the most desirable consoles to collect. Although the deep end of collecting is quickly requiring a well padded wallet to bask in, both gamers and collectors can take pleasure in the knowledge that the majority of the Super Nintendo's classic titles can still be had at a reasonable price.

THE PERIPHERALS



» The Super Wild Card's floppy disc port made backing-up games a doddle. But most people weren't just 'backing-up' their games…

» It was game-copying made easy, and we can thank most ROM's online today to devices like this.

SUPER WILD CARD

With cartridges breaking the upper limits of £59.99 in the Nineties, SNES owners often found themselves limited to how many games they can afford. While this did make game rental services a profitable business, the more savvy gamers amongst us looked for other solutions.

Piracy and cartridge copiers were no stranger to the games industry. Nintendo had already embraced the illegitimate series of 'Game Doctors' for the Famicom, which ironically used the Famicom Disk System's proprietary medium of unique disks to create counterfeit software. The SNES equivalent, however, used a more accessible method, which effectively made those expensive cartridges a non-issue.

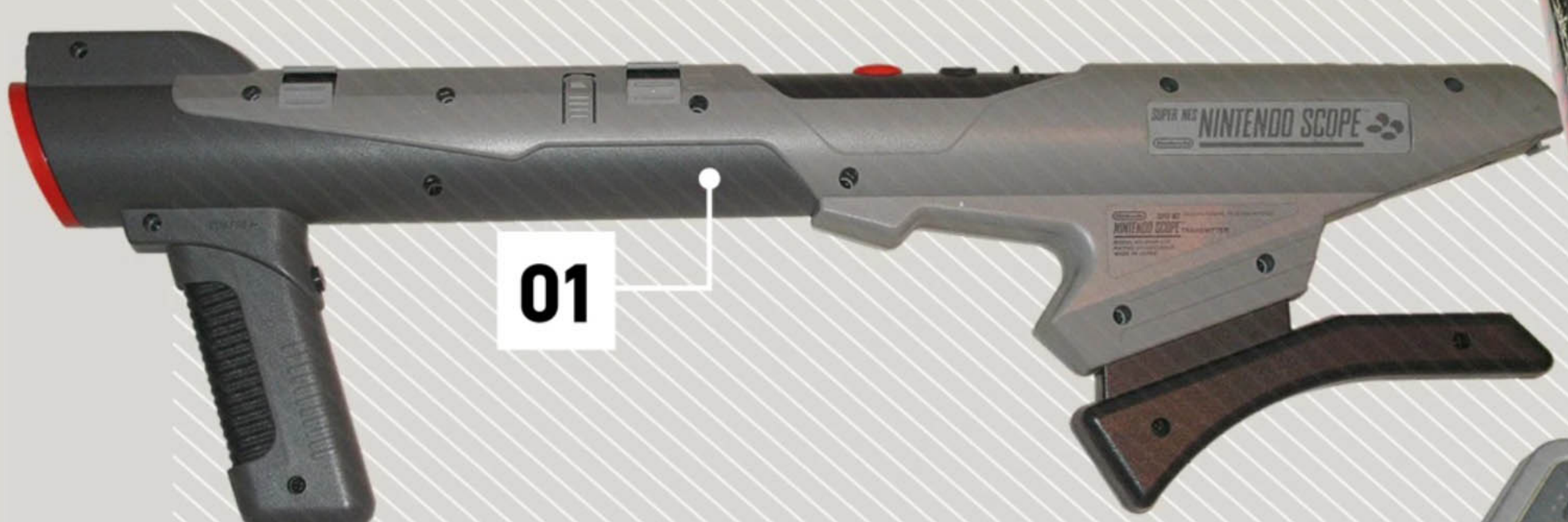
The Super Wild Card released by Front Far East was amongst the many different flavours of backup devices which began to surface. Within each unit lay a floppy disk drive capable of reading and writing to a range of 3½-inch disk formats. Once powered up, a simplistic menu appeared on screen with the option to either back-up or load a game from the disk currently inserted. Titles exceeding the capacity of a single disk, such as the massive 48 Mbit *Tales Of Phantasia*, were broken down into multiple files often spanning a range of disks. Once the entire contents of these backups had been loaded into memory, the chosen backup would load instantly, replicating the true cartridge experience flawlessly.

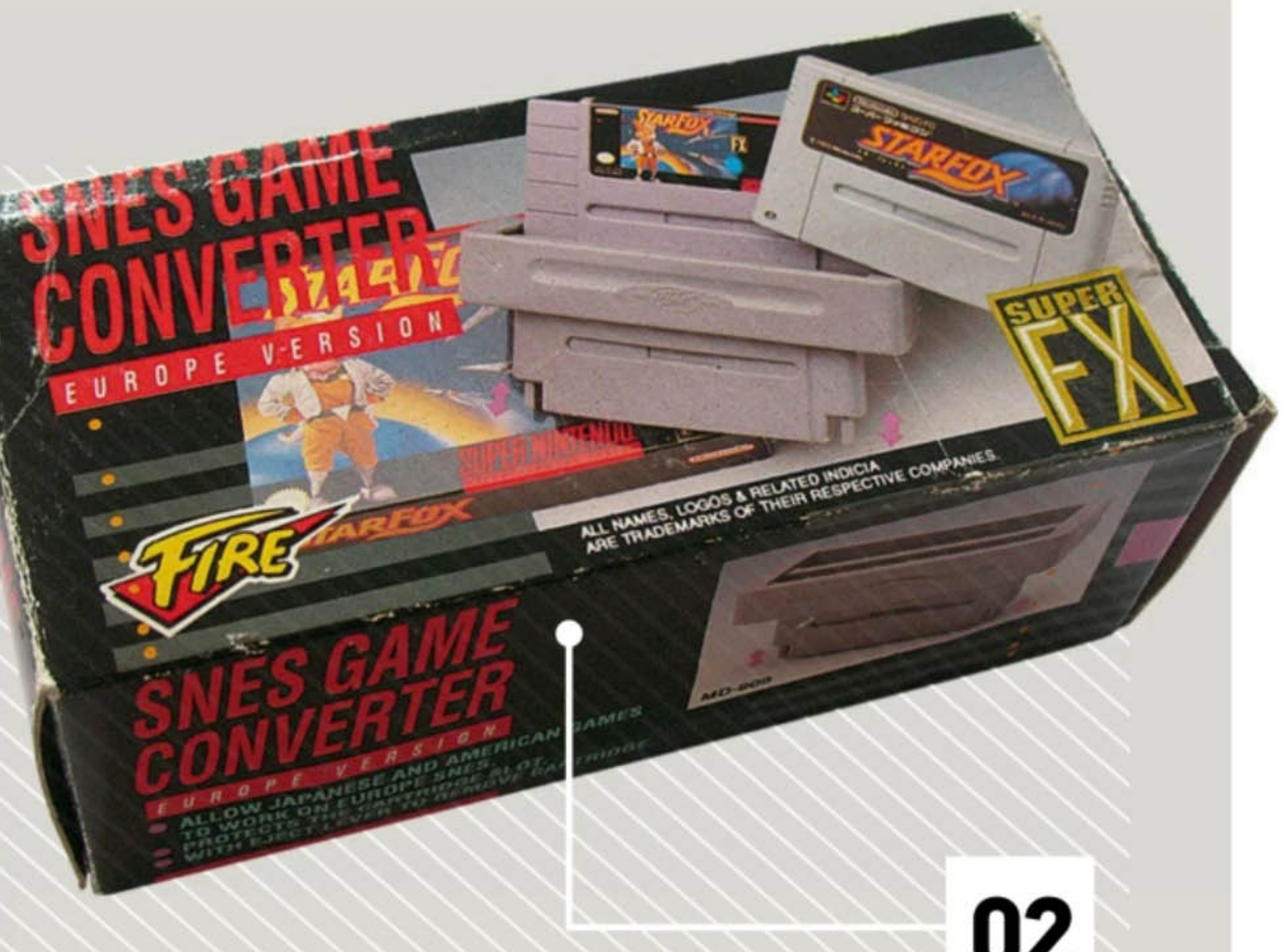
Unfortunately for Nintendo, the entire process of backing up a Super Nintendo cartridge onto a disk was all too easy. Given that all you needed to duplicate a game was a minimum of one disk and the cartridge to copy from, swashbuckling gamers made the most of Blockbuster's game rental service by spending evenings 'renting' the selection of new releases. To make matters worse for the Nintendo, the disks written by the Super Wild Card were readable by any home computer with a disk drive installed. On each disk was a single ROM file (or single file broken up over multiple disks), which could be quickly copied onto another blank disk for the next well-equipped pirate gamer.

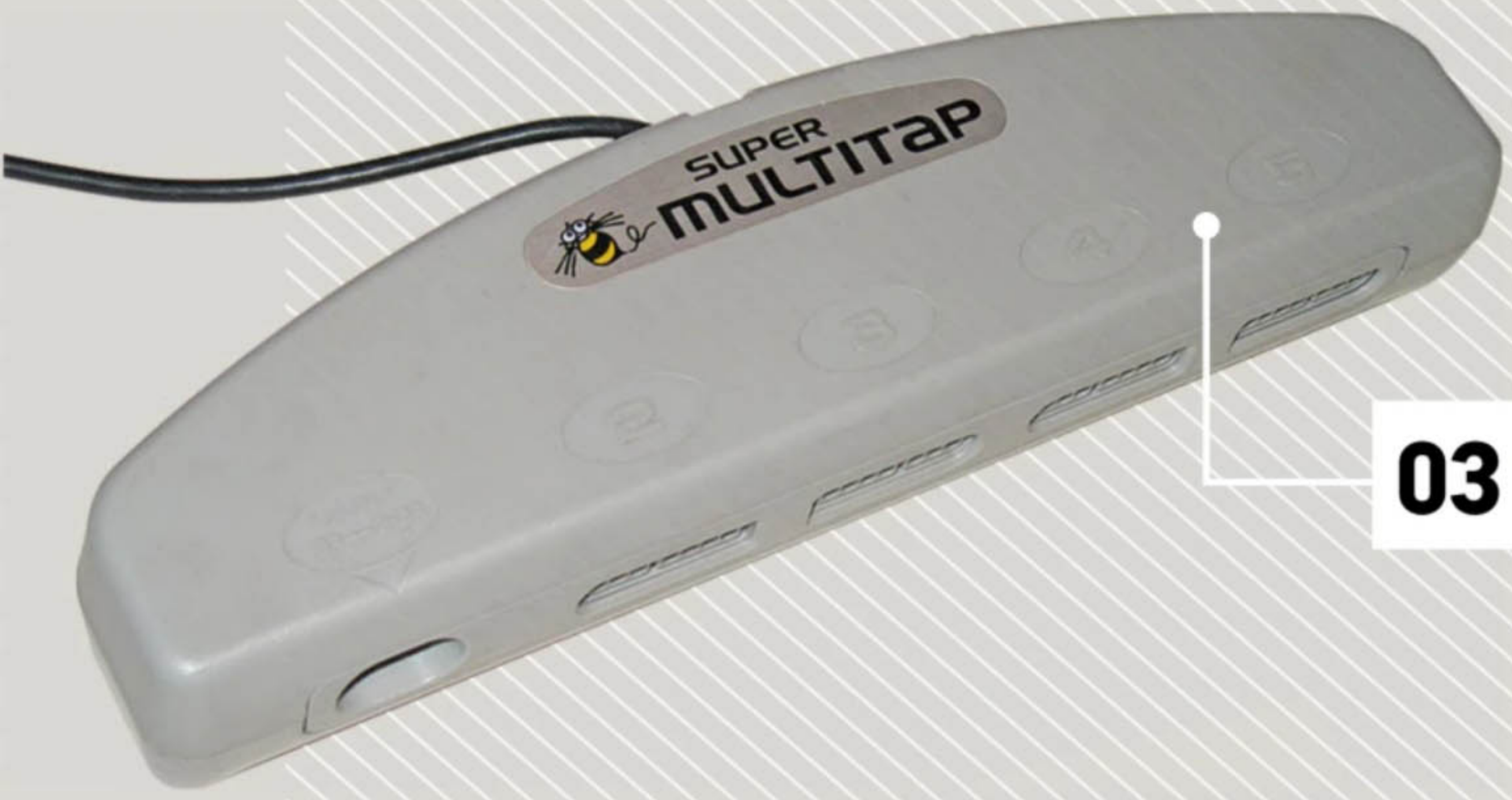
With newer games starting to exceed the capacity of a single disk, loading often became cumbersome. On the rear side of the Super Wild Card was a solution – a parallel port. With the right software available, gamers could send ROM files via a PC through a parallel port cable, in which the cartridge copier would begin to write to memory and execute the game upon completion. This quicker method was then bettered once more with the arrival of the newer and more expensive Super Wild Card DX2, a unit which allowed its disk drive to be swapped for a CD-ROM drive.

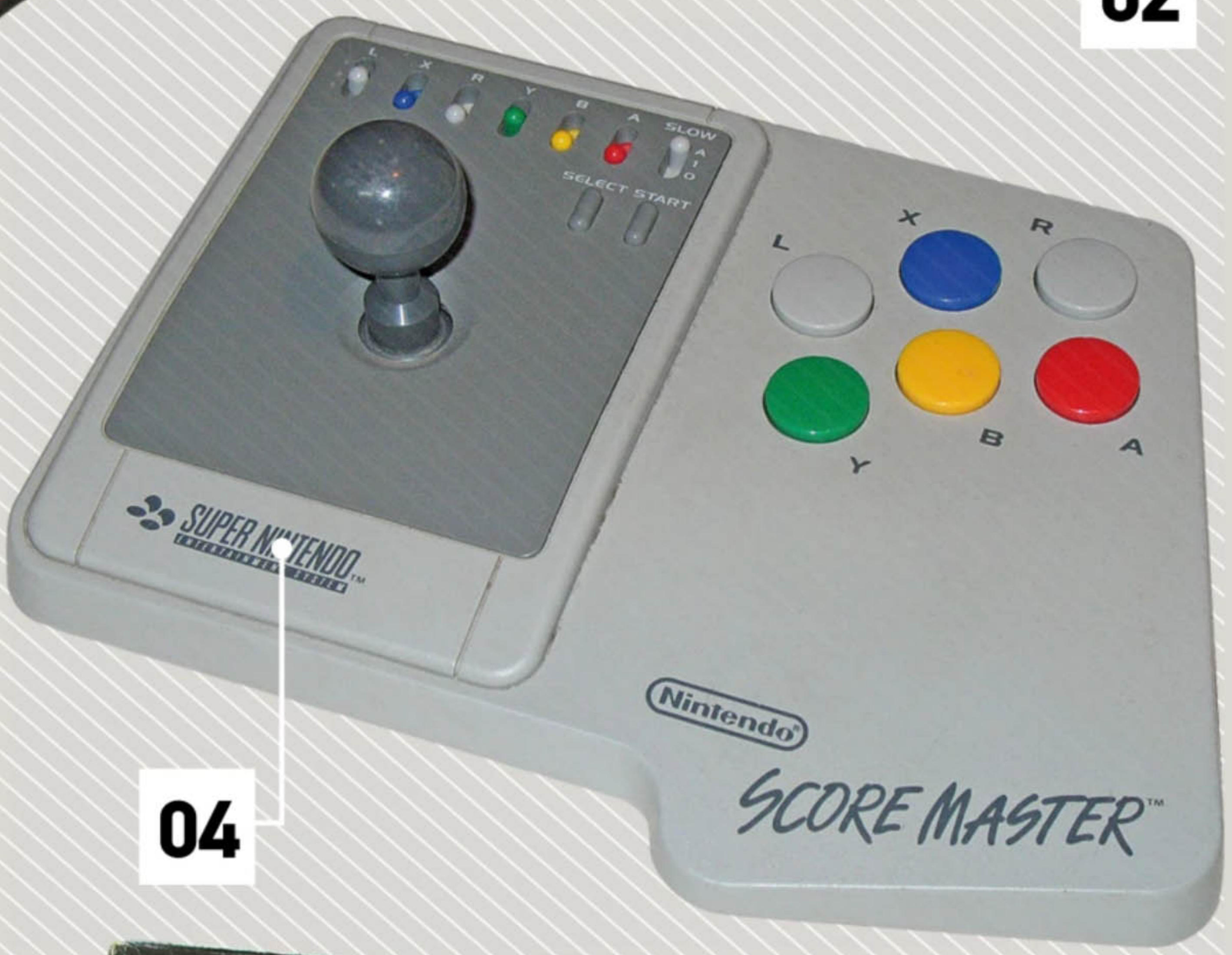
No matter which way you looked at it, the countless features made the Super Wild Card a rather inviting, although dishonest device. That said, these devices deserve our thanks as they are the main reason why the entire Super Nintendo library has been archived for future generations to come, in what we more commonly know as ROMs.

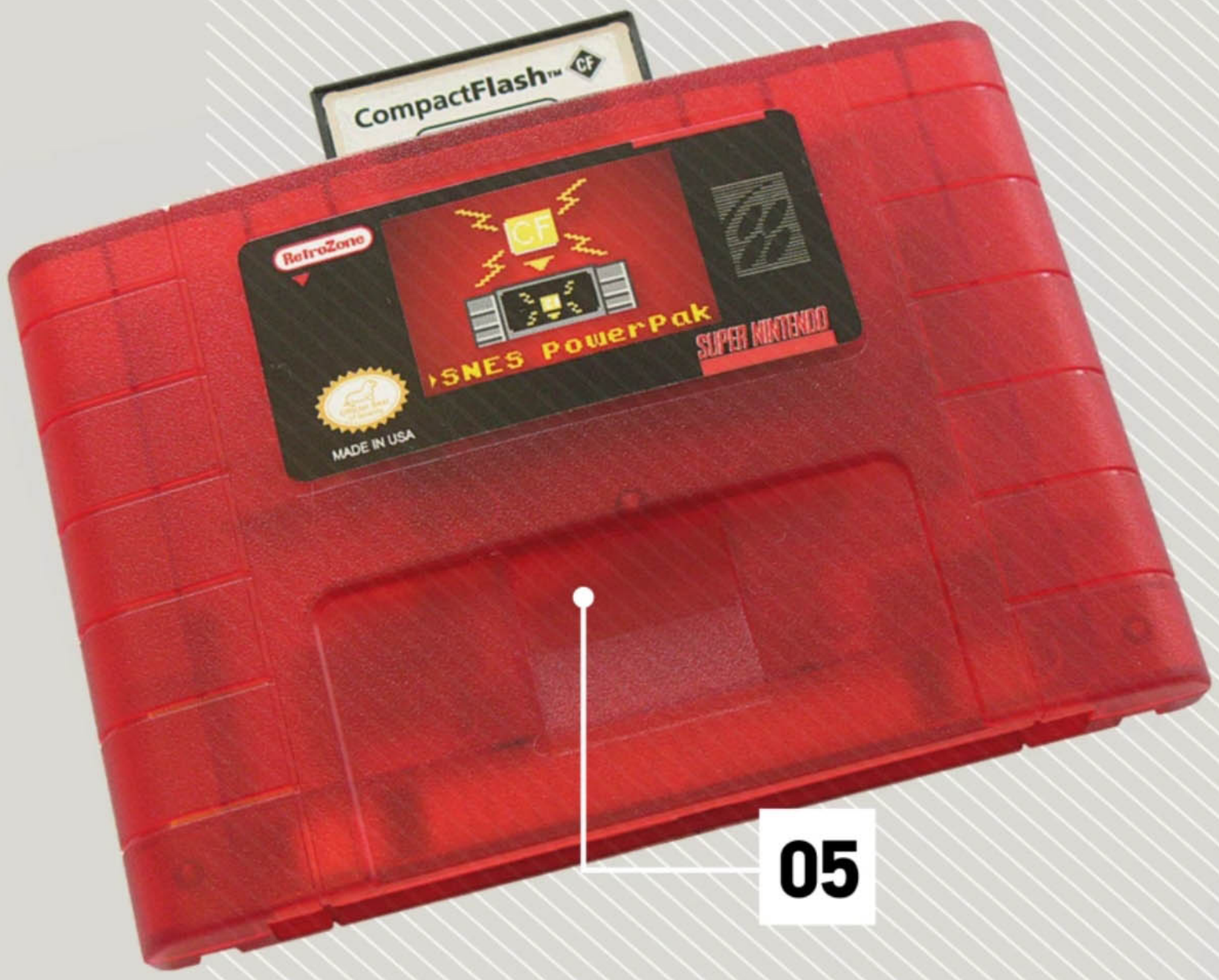
…AND THE REST

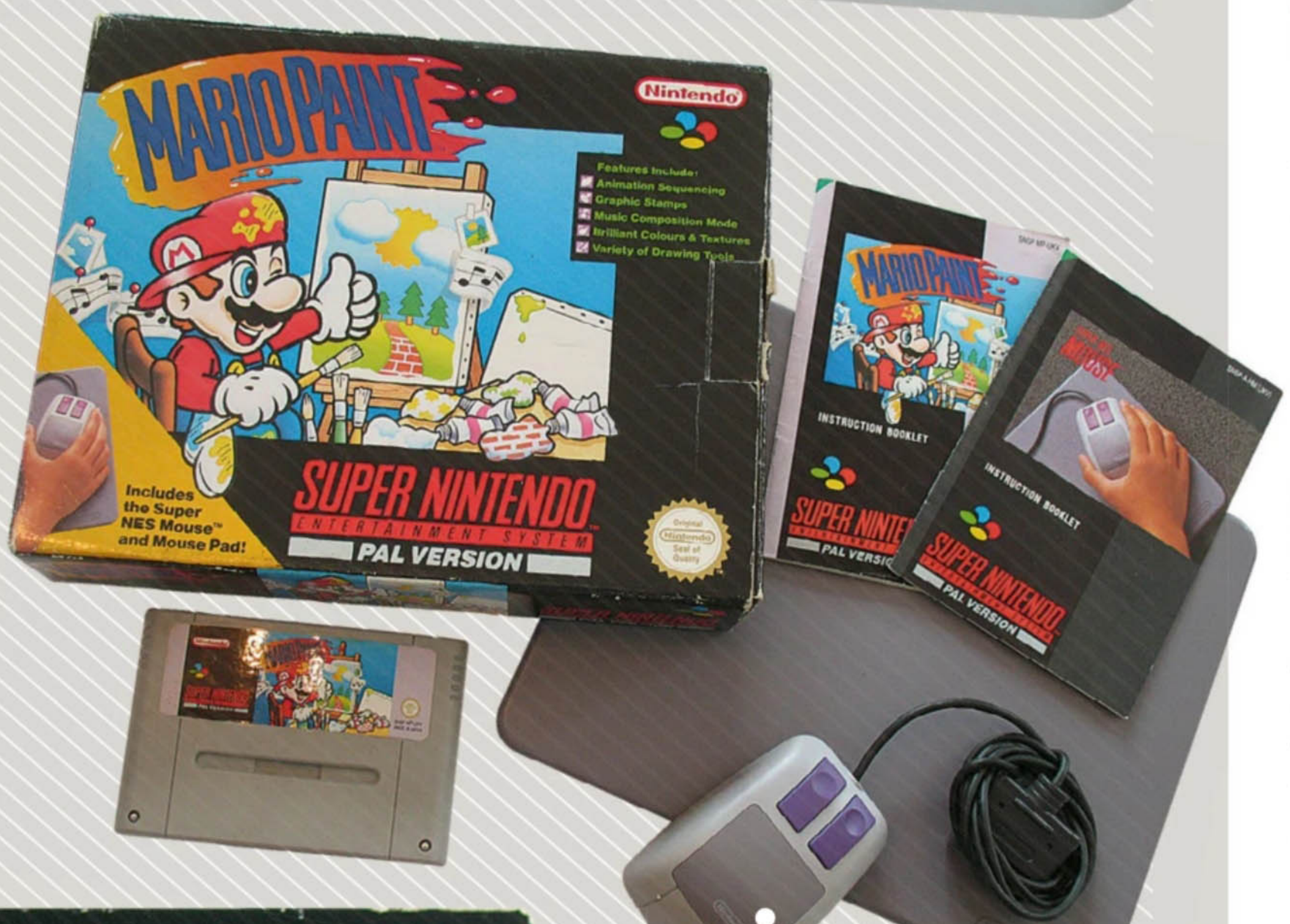

SUPER NINTENDO SCOPE
01

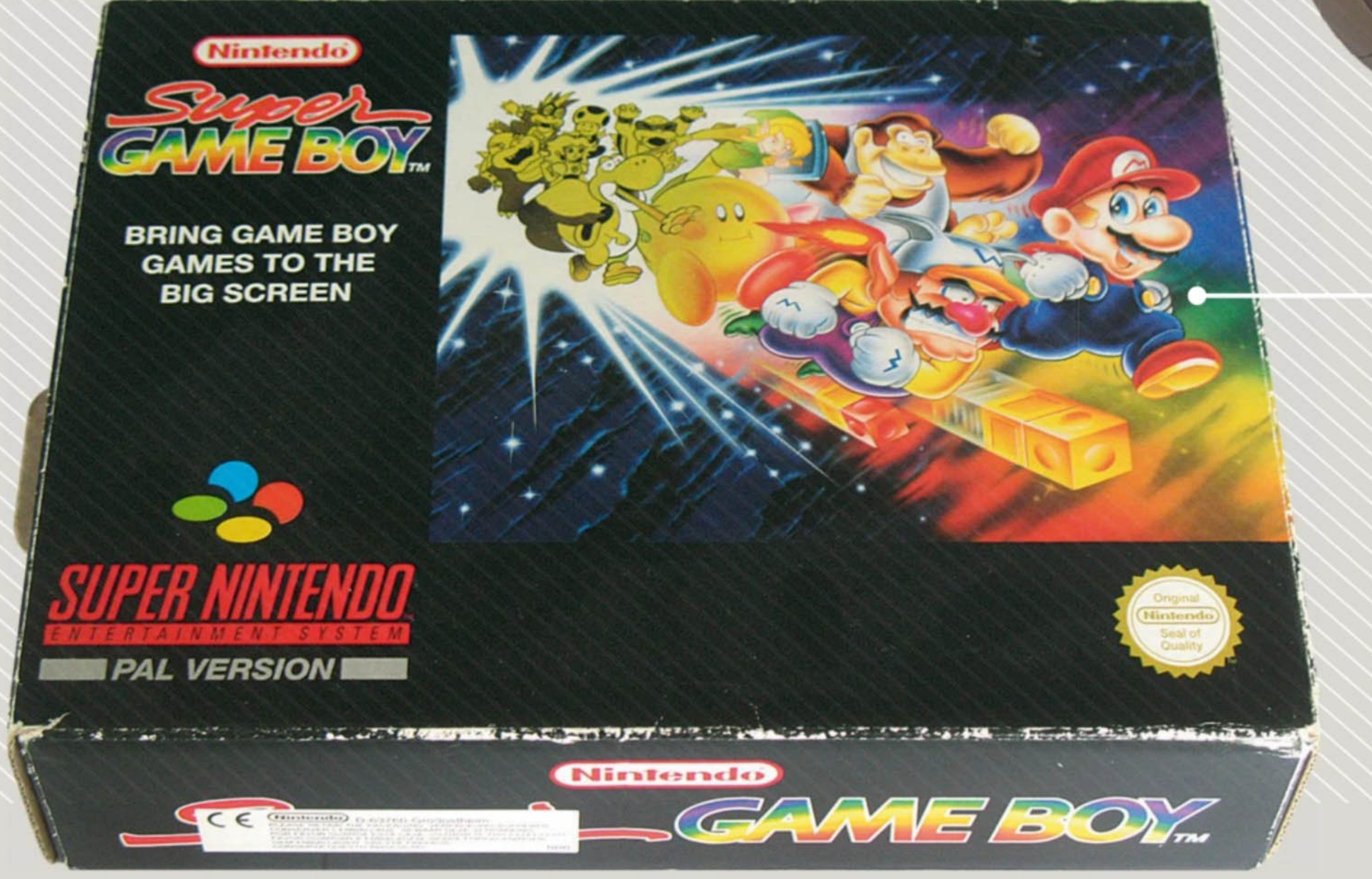

SNES GAME CONVERTER
EUROPE VERSION
SUPER FX
STARFOX
02


SUPER MULTITAP
03


SUPER NINTENDO
Nintendo
SCORE MASTER
04


CompactFlash
SNES PowerPak
SUPER NINTENDO
05


MARIO PAINT
Includes the Super NES Mouse and Mouse Pad!
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION
06


Nintendo
Super GAME BOY
BRING GAME BOY GAMES TO THE BIG SCREEN
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION
07

01. Super Scope

■ In an attempt to out-do one another in the light gun department, both Sega and Nintendo believed that 'bigger was better'. Light guns soon became light bazookas, and adding to the absurdity, the Super Scope was fitted with a shoulder rest and scope – making gamers feel rather awkward in front of the television.

02. Blaze Import Adapter

■ With Europe caught up in an import frenzy, meticulous gamers needed to make sure their rig was equipped for the amplitude of treats from abroad. As US games were too wide for the PAL slot, import adapters extended the cartridge slot upwards allowing all shapes and sizes to be attached.

03. Hudson Soft's Super Multitap

■ Realising the limitations of their earlier *Bomberman* outing on the NES, Hudson Soft bundled a four player adapter with its 16-bit release *Super Bomberman*. Allowing up to four players to connect into one controller port, players began to blast their way through a collection of tangled control pads and angry competitors.

04. Super Advantage/ Score Master

■ In a time when the arcades still offered unmatchable graphics and gameplay, the nearest you could get to the coin-op experience at home was with an arcade stick. Following on from the NES Advantage arcade stick, Nintendo released an updated model for the SNES known as the Super Advantage.

05. Super Everdrive and SNES PowerPak

■ Seen as the more modern alternative to the Super Wild Card, the newly introduced memory card-compatible cartridges allowed gamers to access the entire library of Super Nintendo games without emulation. Eliminating the need to invest deeply for the rarer titles, these state-of-the-art devices come as the ultimate accessory for the SNES.

06. Super Nintendo Mouse

■ Arriving bundled with the novelty graphic software package, *Mario Paint*, the compatibility of the SNES Mouse was often overlooked. Capable of working with over 50 games, the SNES Mouse offered gamers much more precision for the likes of *Sim City* and *Lemmings 2: The Tribes*.

07. Super Game Boy

■ In 1994 a device capable of playing Game Boy games on a Television was introduced to the Super Nintendo. Not only did this device allow full-screen action on games intended for a small LCD display, but it also enhanced the visuals with a range of colour and decorative borders to select Game Boy cartridges.

The Collector's Guide

TOP GAMES TO PLAY

SUPER MARIO KART
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION
INSTRUCTION BOOKLET

Super Mario Kart

■ Was there ever any doubt that this manic multiplayer racer would make the list? The near-perfect kart racer still remains the pinnacle of the series to this day, and has spawned an abundance of clones.

STARWING
FX
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION
INSTRUCTION BOOKLET

Starwing/Star Fox

■ Utilising the powerful Super FX chip *Star Fox* was arguably one of the most groundbreaking releases during the Super Nintendo's lifespan, proving 3D was easily done in 16-bit.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
A LINK TO THE PAST
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION
INSTRUCTION BOOKLET
TOP SECRETS

The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past

■ Having returned after a four-year hiatus, Link was back in his only outing on the Super Nintendo, proving there was still a plethora of life in the Hyrule legacy.

SUPER MARIO WORLD
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION
INSTRUCTION BOOKLET

Super Mario World

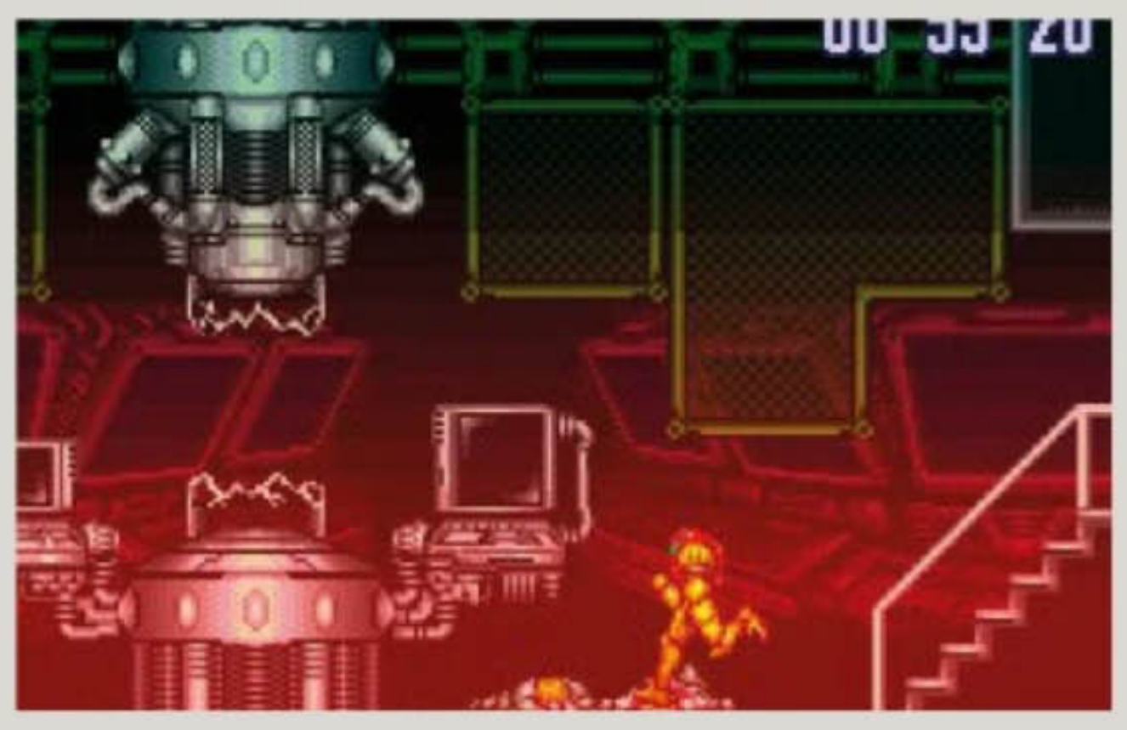
■ Following on from the success of the NES hit release *Super Mario Bros 3*, Mario's next appearance on the Super Nintendo strengthened the very roots of the platform genre.

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY
FREE INSIDE
CD
GO APE!
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION
Nintendo

Donkey Kong Country

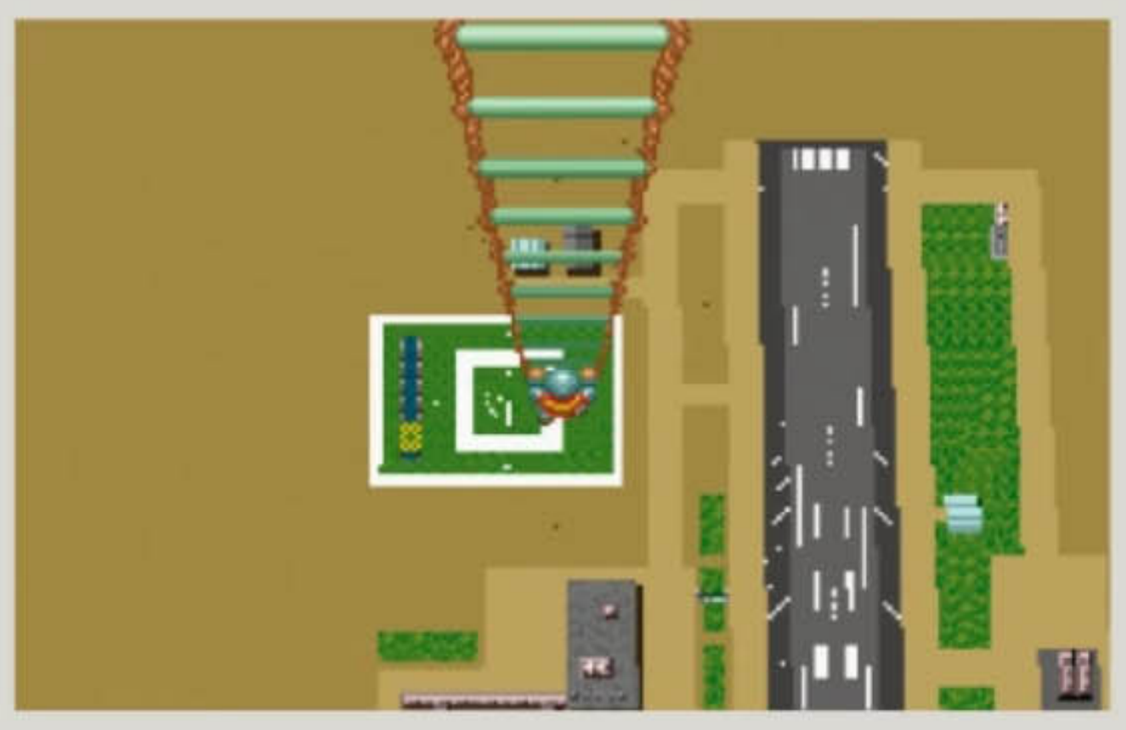
■ While offering a perfect blend of challenges and frustration, *Donkey Kong Country* should be in every collection purely for its sensational soundtrack and attention to detail.

PLAY THESE NEXT



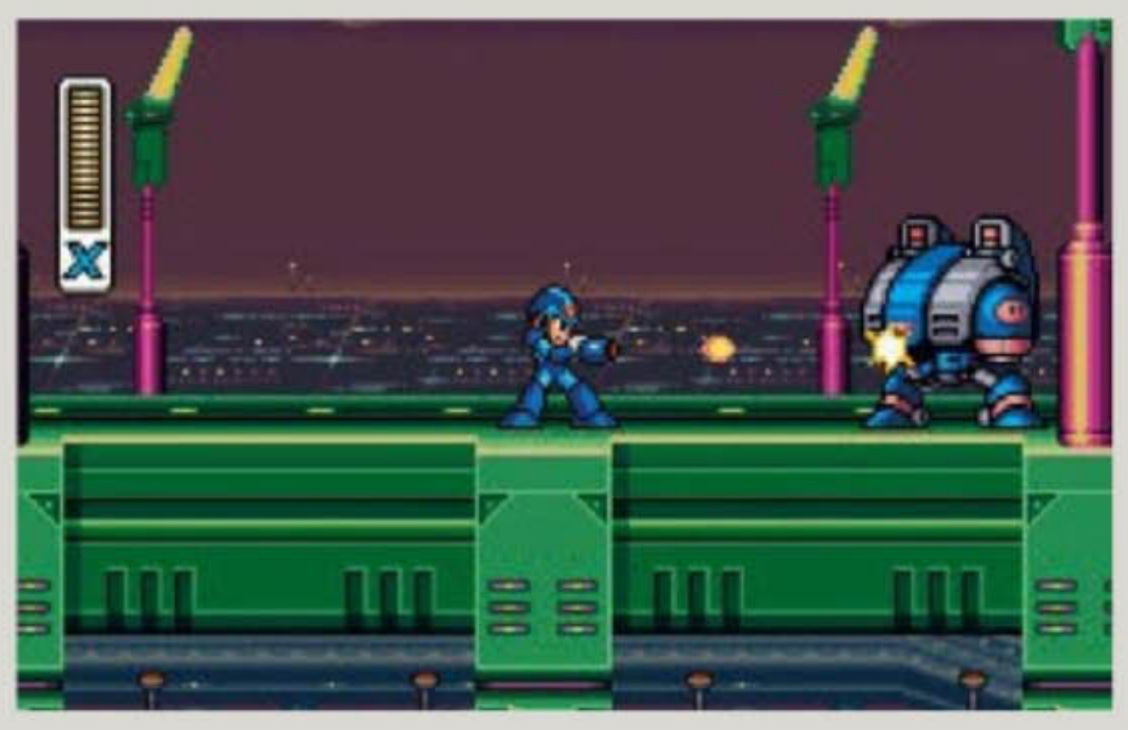
Super Metroid

■ Eight years after Samus' first appearance, the third game in the *Metroid* series arrived on the SNES in 1994. It offered a doomed space colony to explore and the potential to get lost deep within Planet Zebes. The UK and German releases of *Super Metroid* also came in an oversized box bundled with a 72 page strategy guide.



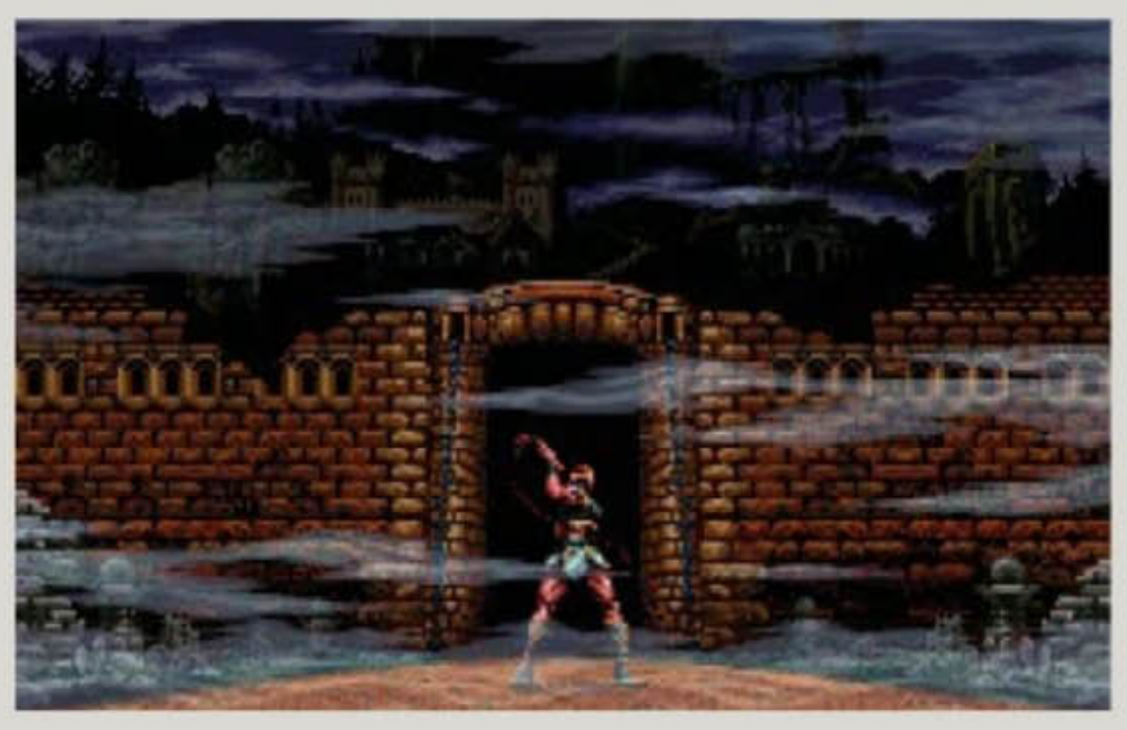
Pilotwings

■ Falling into the lackluster flight simulation genre, *Pilotwings* was an unexpected hit arriving on launch day for the Super Nintendo. Taking control of some stunt-hungry aviators, your job is to carefully guide a selection of aircraft through hoops and loops. Easier said than done, *Pilotwings* is one of the hardest games to master.



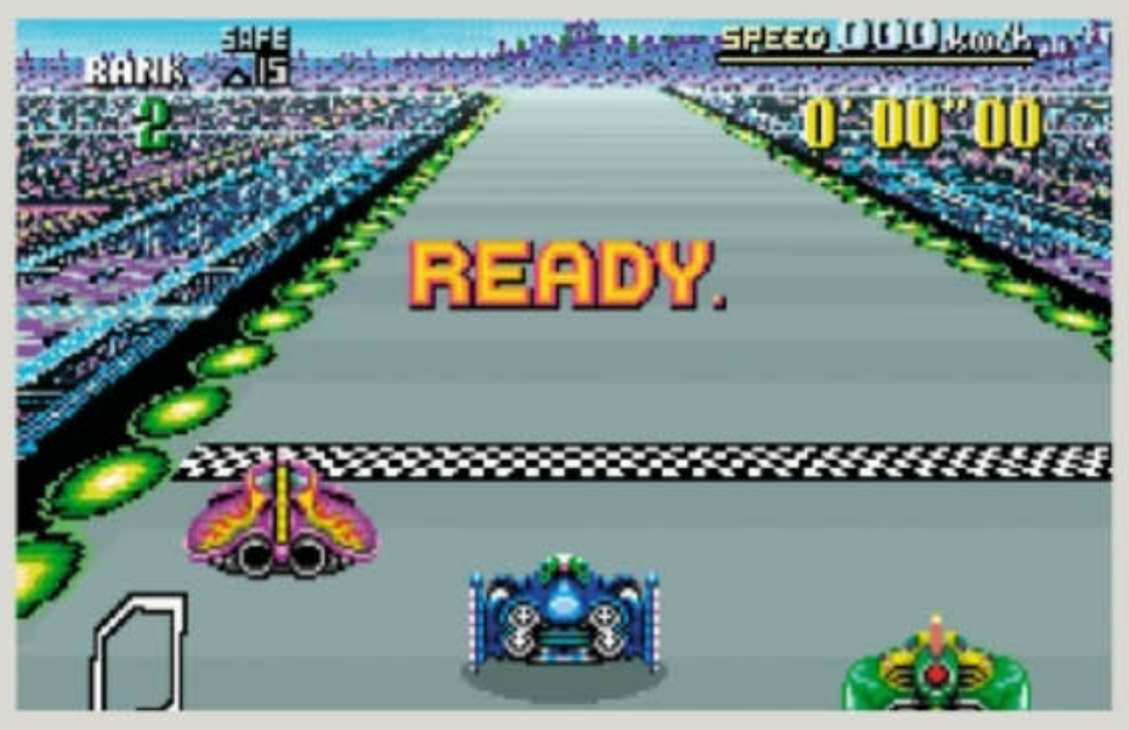
Mega Man X

■ Like every other popular franchise on the NES, *Mega Man* was reborn on the Super Nintendo with a multitude of new abilities. Having outgrown his clunky robotic suit, the blue bomber was now able to dash and kick-jump walls. These tricks might of helped, but it was still an insanely difficult action-platformer.



Super Castlevania IV

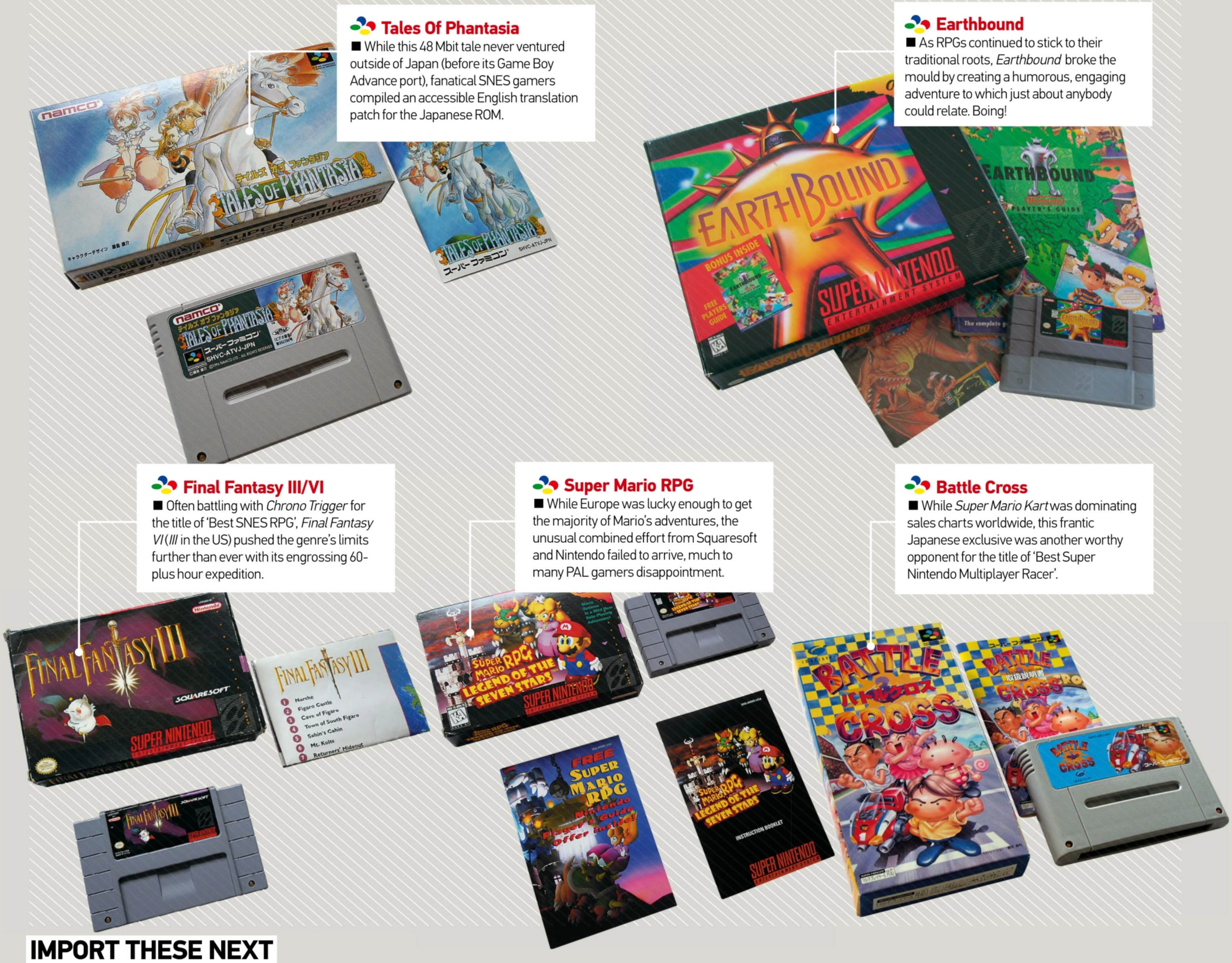
■ With Dracula's revival dawning on Simon Belmont, the fourth edition in the hit series *Castlevania* arrived on the Super Nintendo just months after the console's release. Offering a range of graphical trickery, elaborate challenges and a groundbreaking soundtrack, *Super Castlevania IV* confidently built upon the iconic *Castlevania* name.


RANK
SPEED
0'00"00
READY

F-Zero

■ If there was ever a game to demonstrate the potential power and capability of a new system, *F-Zero* was it. Using the newly included feature of Mode 7 graphics on the Super Nintendo, the ultra-fast futuristic racer took faux-3D gaming to an all new level, both graphically and where gameplay is concerned.

TOP IMPORT GAMES



Tales Of Phantasia

■ While this 48 Mbit tale never ventured outside of Japan (before its Game Boy Advance port), fanatical SNES gamers compiled an accessible English translation patch for the Japanese ROM.

Earthbound

■ As RPGs continued to stick to their traditional roots, *Earthbound* broke the mould by creating a humorous, engaging adventure to which just about anybody could relate. Boing!

Final Fantasy III/VI

■ Often battling with *Chrono Trigger* for the title of 'Best SNES RPG', *Final Fantasy VI* (*III* in the US) pushed the genre's limits further than ever with its engrossing 60-plus hour expedition.

Super Mario RPG

■ While Europe was lucky enough to get the majority of Mario's adventures, the unusual combined effort from Squaresoft and Nintendo failed to arrive, much to many PAL gamers disappointment.

Battle Cross

■ While *Super Mario Kart* was dominating sales charts worldwide, this frantic Japanese exclusive was another worthy opponent for the title of 'Best Super Nintendo Multiplayer Racer'.

IMPORT THESE NEXT

Chrono Trigger

■ Squaresoft unquestionably defined the JRPG genre in the Nineties with their vast selection of epic adventures. *Chrono Trigger* was no different, presenting itself as one of the best releases of the decade. If the storyline wasn't enough to convince you, the visuals of *Dragon Quest* and *Dragon Ball Z* artist Akira Toriyama would.

Magical Pop'n

■ In what appears to be a light-hearted side-scrolling adventure, *Magical Pop'n* lures gamers in with its cute visuals shortly before unleashing an unforgettable challenge. After rising to cult hidden-gem status, this Japanese exclusive release developed by Polestar has seen endless competition for ownership on eBay.

The King of Demons (Majyuuou)

■ Often referred to as '*Castlevania* with a gun', *The King of Demons (Majyuuou)* is yet another addition to the list of hidden gems on the SNES. Featuring detailed landscapes and character sprites, the 1995 action game by KSS leaves many gamers wondering why it missed out on an a PAL release.

DoReMi Fantasy: Milon's DokiDoki Adventure

■ The top contender for the most sickeningly cute visuals is surely this, Hudson Soft's platformer is the perfect remedy for those gloomy days. Having never left Japan, the highly desirable and enjoyable *DoReMi Fantasy* has seen an incredible rise in value over the last few years.

Ogre Battle: March of the Black Queen

■ Although many will argue *Final Fantasy Tactics* defined the turn-based tactical RPG, *Ogre Battle* has many gameplay hooks which Squaresoft's later release owes inspiration to. While commanding high price-tags today, Atlus recently re-released the game on the PSP.

TOP RAREST PAL GAMES

X Zone

■ Hailing from Scandinavia, this incredibly rare Nordic exclusive was one of the few releases to make use of the under-loved and under-used Super Scope light gun (or should that be light bazooka?)

Cool World

■ Arriving on the Super Nintendo as a tie-in for the (highly forgettable) movie of the same name, the Spanish exclusive of *Cool World* flopped even harder than the disappointing feature film.

Whirlo

■ Continuing to prove Spain has plenty to offer the rarity hunters, this hard-to-find Namco platformer offers much more than rarity alone, as it's an adorable and addictive adventure.

Brawl Brothers

■ By the time Jaleco released this sequel to *Rival Turf*, gamers had grown tired of side-scrolling beat-'em-ups, leaving *Brawl Brothers* to be fought over in years to come.

Aero The Acrobat 2

■ Despite being a rather enjoyable follow-up to *Aero*'s last outing, *Aero The Acrobat 2* exists in numbers arguably smaller than the financial figures it commands. A rarity worth having, if only for future price.

GET THESE NEXT

Daze Before Christmas

■ Rumoured to have only been sold during Christmas of 1994, this seasonal platformer unsurprisingly remains to be one of the tougher Super Nintendo titles to locate. Given its limited holiday shelf-life and lack of re-playability, this festive release sold in very low numbers similar to the Mega Drive game of the same name.

Operation Logic Bomb

■ Arriving as a sequel to the Game Boy top-down shooter *Fortified Zone*, the German release of *Operation Logic Bomb* was a shallow game offering nothing but pretty visuals. Like many Jaleco releases for the SNES, Operation Logic Bomb comes with a rather impressive rarity as collectors attempt to locate the failed shooter.

Space Invaders

■ Despite being a runaway hit in countless 1978 arcades, the PAL Super Nintendo-port of *Space Invaders* was only released in limited quantities throughout Australia. While the game remains a timeless classic, Taito did very little with the arcade port to make it stand out against the wide range of engaging SNES games.

Super Chase HQ

■ Adding the prefix of 'Super' to the name of an older game wasn't always a promise of enhanced gameplay and visuals. Taito took their much-loved arcade hit *Chase HQ* and sculpted an unplayable mess featuring a new in-car view. With such poor review scores, *Super Chase HQ* remained on the shelves, becoming a future rarity.

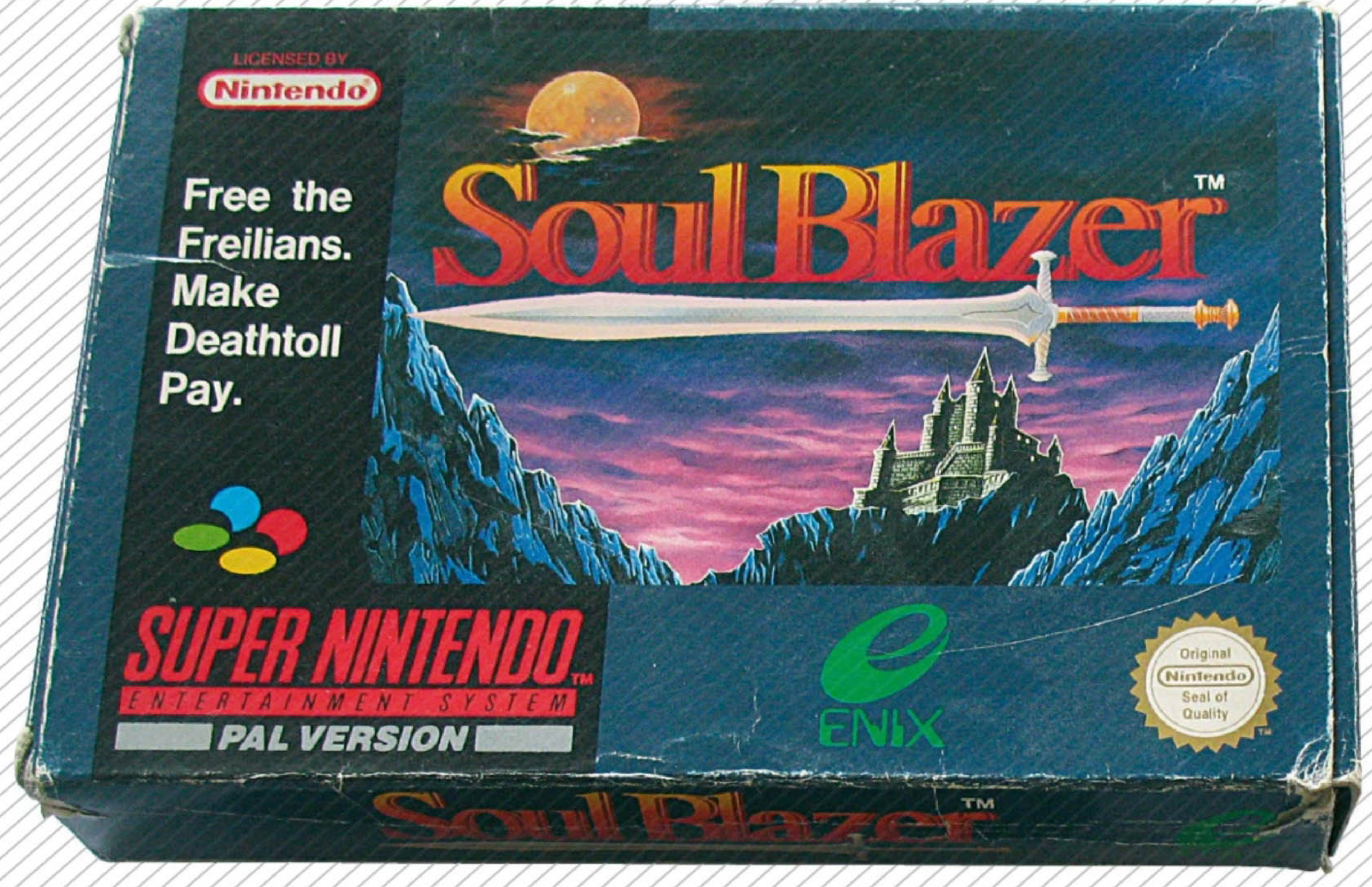
Hungry Dinosaurs

■ There's always a handful of games on any console that just don't click with gamers, *Hungry Dinosaurs* being one of them. Arriving as a two-player hybrid of *Othello* and *Snake*, this incredibly dull stone age-themed release sold poorly following a very negative reception from both gaming publications and gamers themselves.

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

It's commonly thought that no English language version of Soul Blazer exists. But is that true? If you turn to an unlikely place, you might just be surprised…

Nintendo
Soul Blazer
Free the Freilians. Make Deathtoll Pay.
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION
ENIX


LICENSED BY
Nintendo
Free the Freilians. Make Deathtoll Pay.
Soul Blazer™
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
PAL VERSION
Original Nintendo Seal of Quality
ENIX

SNSP-SO-SCN
Soul Blazer™
INSTRUCTION BOOKLET
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
PAL VERSION
ENIX

Nintendo
Soul Blazer™
ENIX
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION
MADE IN JAPAN
SNSP-SO-SCN

Soul Blazer™
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
COPYRIGHT 1992 QUINTET/ENIX
LICENSED BY NINTENDO

What makes it so special?

■ The most common versions of *Soul Blazer* hail from Europe and are in French or German, rendering it unplayable for the rest of the continent. Unknown to those who continue to import Enix's hit from abroad, an English language version of Soul Blazer has been available all these years, hidden deep within Scandinavia.

Why is it so expensive?

■ While the English language version is highly desirable, there's often another reason for the fluster of bids. The common European versions featured much plainer alternate artwork, surrounded by unattractive black borders. The harder to find game comes with a more attractive cover contained within stylish navy blue borders.

INSTRUCTION BOOKLET
Soul Blazer
SUPER NINTENDO
PAL VERSION

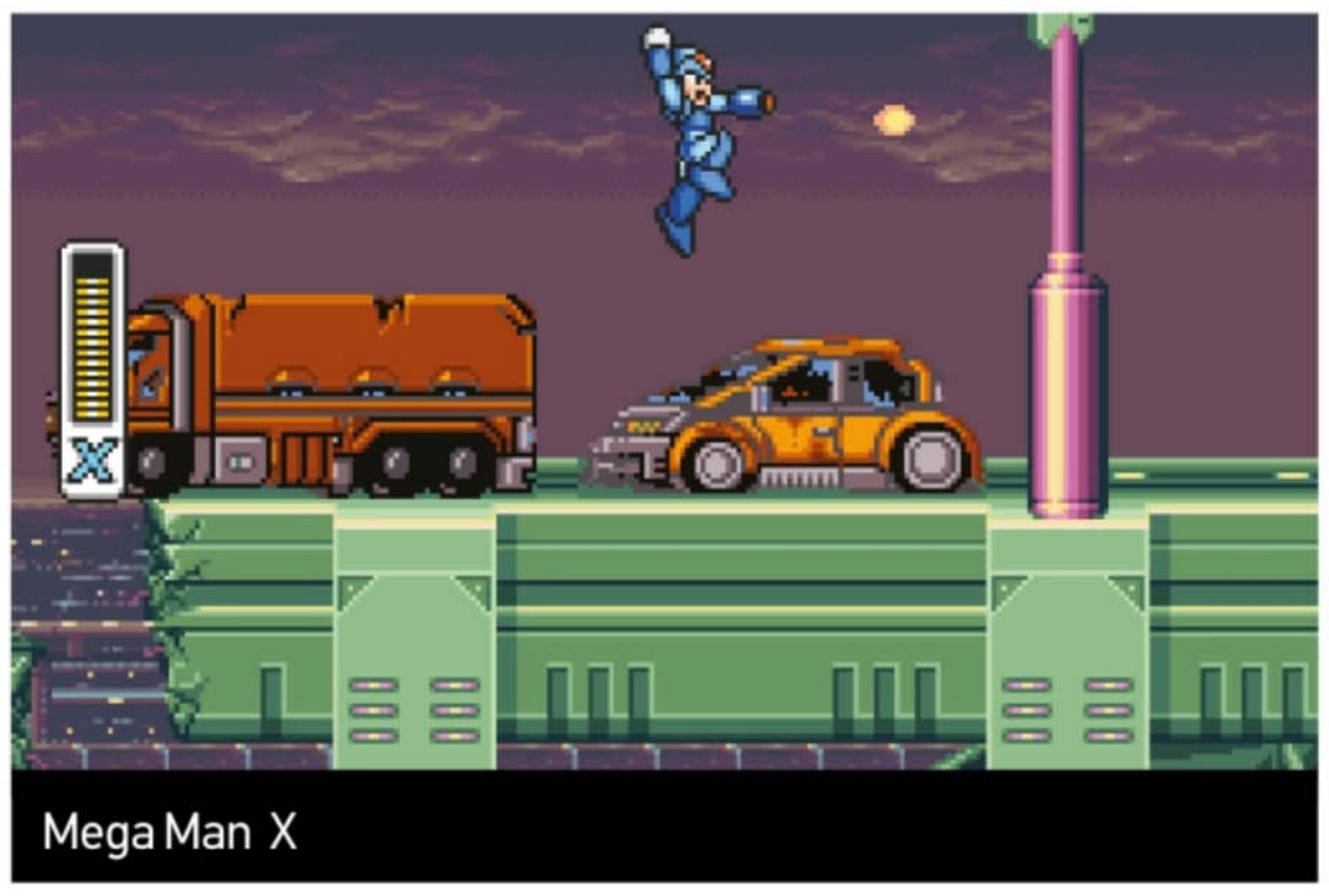
What makes it hard to find?

■ Acquiring the Scandinavian exclusive is no easy feat. Given the nearest to a Nordic eBay is Trader. The possibility of locating it, combined with finding a seller willing to accept offers from abroad, makes obtaining *Soul Blazer* a challenge. Those unwilling to embrace the struggle will have to wait for one to surface on eBay.

THE SUPER NINTENDO GAMES YOU NEED TO OWN

ACME Animation Factory ☐
ActRaiser ☐
ActRaiser 2 ☐
Addams Family Values ☐
The Addams Family ☐
The Addams Family: Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt ☐
The Adventures Of Batman & Robin ☐
The Adventures Of Mighty Max ☐
Aero The Acro-Bat ☐
Aero The Acro-Bat 2 ☐
Aguri Suzuki F-1 Super Driving ☐
Aladdin (Disney's) ☐
Alien Vs. Predator ☐
Alien 3 ☐
All-American Championship Football ☐
Animaniacs ☐
Another World ☐
Ardy Lightfoot ☐
Arkanoid ☐
Astérix ☐
Astérix & Obélix ☐
Axelay ☐
Batman Returns ☐
BattleClash ☐
Battletoads In Battlemaniacs ☐
Beauty & The Beast (Disney's) ☐
Beethoven: The Ultimate Canine Caper ☐
BioMetal ☐
BlackHawk ☐
The Blues Brothers ☐
Boxing Legends Of The Ring ☐
Brawl Brothers: Rival Turf! 2 ☐
Breath Of Fire II ☐
Bubsy II ☐
Cannon Fodder ☐
Captain Commando ☐
Casper ☐
Castlevania: Vampire's Kiss ☐
Chuck Rock ☐
Congo's Caper ☐
Cool Spot ☐
Cool World ☐
Cybernator ☐
Darius Twin ☐
Daze Before Christmas ☐
The Death And Return Of Superman ☐
Demon's Crest ☐

Cannon Fodder



Mega Man X

Desert Strike: Return To The Gulf ☐
Dino City ☐
Donald In Maui Mallard ☐
Donkey Kong Country ☐
Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest ☐
Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble! ☐
Double Dragon V: The Shadow Falls ☐
Dragon Ball Z ☐
Dragon Ball Z: Hyper Dimension ☐
Dragon Ball Z: La Légende SAIEN ☐
Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Menace ☐
Earth Defence Force ☐
Earthworm Jim ☐
Earthworm Jim 2 ☐
Equinox ☐
F-Zero ☐
Family Dog ☐
Fatal Fury 2 ☐
Final Fight ☐
Final Fight 2 ☐
Final Fight 3 ☐
The Firemen ☐
Flashback ☐
Foreman For Real ☐
Ghoul Patrol ☐
Gods ☐
Goof Troop (Disney's) ☐
GP-1 ☐
Hagane: The Final Conflict ☐
Harvest Moon ☐
The Humans ☐
Hungry Dinosaurs ☐
Hyper V-Ball ☐
HyperZone ☐
Illusion Of Time ☐
Incantation ☐
Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures ☐
International Sensible Soccer: World Champions: Limited Edition Featuring World Cup Teams ☐
International Superstar Soccer Deluxe ☐
International Tennis Tour ☐
Jack Nicklaus Golf ☐
Jimmy Connors Pro Tennis Tour ☐
Joe & Mac: Caveman Ninja ☐
Joe & Mac ☐
Kid Klown In Crazy Chase ☐
Killer Instinct ☐
King Of Dragons ☐
Kirby's Dream Course ☐

Kirby's Fun Pack ☐
Kirby's Ghost Trap ☐
Knights Of The Round ☐
Legend ☐
The Legend Of The Mystical Ninja ☐
The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past ☐
Lemmings ☐
Lemmings 2: The Tribes ☐
Lethal Enforcers ☐
Loony Toons Basketball ☐
The Lost Vikings ☐
The Lost Vikings II: Norse By Norsewest ☐
Lufia ☐
Magic Sword ☐
The Magical Quest Starring Mickey Mouse ☐
Mario Paint ☐
Marko's Magic Football ☐
Marvel Super Heroes In War Of The Games ☐
Mega Man 7 ☐

Pilotwings

Mega Man X ☐
Mega Man X2 ☐
Mega Man X3 ☐
Metal Combat: Falcon's Revenge ☐
Mickey Mania ☐
Micro Machines 2: Turbo Tournament ☐
Mohawk & Headphone Jack ☐
Mortal Kombat II ☐
Mr Do! ☐
Ms Pac-Man ☐
NBA Jam: Tournament Edition ☐
Ninjawarriors: The New Generation ☐
On The Ball ☐
Operation: Logic Bomb ☐
Oscar ☐
Out To Lunch (Pierre Le Chef Is) ☐
Pac-Attack ☐
Pac-Man 2: The New Adventures ☐
Parodius ☐
Phalanx ☐
Pilotwings ☐
Pink Goes To Hollywood ☐
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure ☐
Plok ☐
Pocky & Rocky ☐
Pocky & Rocky 2 ☐
Pop'n Twin Bee ☐
Pop'n Twin Bee: Rainbow Bell Adventures ☐
Power Drive ☐

EXTREMELY RARE	VERY RARE	RARE	UNCOMMON	COMMON	VERY COMMON
Games that have less than a few dozen known copies available.	Very hard to come by. Expect to see only a couple of copies per year.	You should be able to source these in a reasonable amount of time.	You won't find them straight away, but you will after a search.	Always just a click away for the average collector.	So common you'll find them in most bundles of games you buy.

- ☐ Power Rangers Zeo: Battle Racers
- ☐ Prince Of Persia
- ☐ Prince Of Persia 2
- ☐ Putty Squad
- ☐ Puzzle Bobble: Bust-A-Move
- ☐ R-Type III: The Third Lightning
- ☐ Radical Rex
- ☐ Realm
- ☐ The Ren & Stimpy Show: Time Warp
- ☐ The Ren & Stimpy Show: Veediots!
- ☐ Rock 'N' Roll Racing
- ☐ Sailormoon
- ☐ Saturday Night Slammasters
- ☐ Secret Of Evermore
- ☐ Secret Of Mana
- ☐ Sensible Soccer: European Champions
- ☐ Shadowrun
- ☐ Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye
- ☐ Side Pocket
- ☐ SimCity
- ☐ Skyblazer
- ☐ Smash Tennis
- ☐ The Smurfs
- ☐ The Smurfs: Travel The World
- ☐ Soccer Kid
- ☐ Sonic Blast Man
- ☐ Soul Blazer
- ☐ Space Invaders
- ☐ Spanky's Quest
- ☐ Sparkster
- ☐ Spawn (Todd McFarlane's): The Video Game
- ☐ Starwing
- ☐ Street Fighter Alpha 2
- ☐ Street Fighter II
- ☐ Street Fighter II Turbo
- ☐ Street Racer
- ☐ Striker
- ☐ Stunt Race FX
- ☐ Sunset Riders
- ☐ Super Adventure Island
- ☐ Super Adventure Island II
- ☐ Super Aleste
- ☐ Super BC Kid
- ☐ Super Battleship: The Naval Combat Game
- ☐ Super Bomberman
- ☐ Super Bomberman 2
- ☐ Super Bomberman 3

Super Punch-Out!!

- ☐ Super Castlevania IV
- ☐ Super Chase HQ
- ☐ Super Dany
- ☐ Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts
- ☐ Super Ice Hockey
- ☐ Super Mario All-Stars
- ☐ Super Mario All-Stars & Super Mario World
- ☐ Super Mario Kart
- ☐ Super Mario World
- ☐ Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island
- ☐ Super Metroid
- ☐ Super Off Road
- ☐ Super Pang
- ☐ Super Probotector: Alien Rebels
- ☐ Super Punch-Out!!
- ☐ Super Putty
- ☐ Super Smash TV
- ☐ Super Star Wars
- ☐ Super Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back
- ☐ Super Star Wars: Return Of The Jedi
- ☐ Super Street Fighter II
- ☐ Super Strike Gunner
- ☐ Super SWIV
- ☐ Super Tennis
- ☐ Super Turrican
- ☐ Super Turrican 2
- ☐ Super Widget
- ☐ Syvalion
- ☐ Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles IV: Turtles In Time
- ☐ Terranigma
- ☐ Tetris & Dr. Mario
- ☐ Tetris Attack
- ☐ The Chaos Engine
- ☐ The Great Circus Mystery Starring Mickey & Minnie
- ☐ The Lion King (Disney's)
- ☐ Thomas The Tank Engine & Friends
- ☐ Time Trax
- ☐ Tiny Toons Adventures: Buster Busts Loose!
- ☐ TKO Super Championship Boxing
- ☐ Top Gear
- ☐ Top Gear 2
- ☐ Top Gear 3000
- ☐ Toys: Let The Toy Wars Begin!
- ☐ True Golf Classics: Pebble Beach Golf Links
- ☐ UN Squadron
- ☐ Unirally
- ☐ Venom/Spider-Man: Separation Anxiety
- ☐ Wario's Woods
- ☐ WarpSpeed
- ☐ Whirlo
- ☐ Whizz
- ☐ Wild Guns
- ☐ World Cup Striker
- ☐ Worms
- ☐ WWF Wrestlemania: The Arcade Game
- ☐ X Zone
- ☐ Yoshi's Cookie
- ☐ Yoshi's Safari
- ☐ Zero: The Kamikaze Squirrel
- ☐ Zombies

Collector Q&A

Bryan Paton has been collecting SNES games for years and has amassed an impressive collection

How long have you been collecting for?
I have been collecting Super Famicom games since about 1998. Obviously I had a SNES in the early Nineties, but with the high price and only having pocket money, it was hardly collecting. When I started work in 1996 I suddenly had cash flow. At first all my cash went on Japanese N64 releases but after a couple of years I returned to my roots and I began my Super Famicom collection in earnest.

What does the SNES offer over its peers?
At the time it was easily the most powerful mainstream home console and everything looked amazing. Arcade titles like *Street Fighter II* just blew me away, and many of the most popular franchises have had their best instalments on the SNES. I think the sheer number of quality tiles across all genres is its strength.

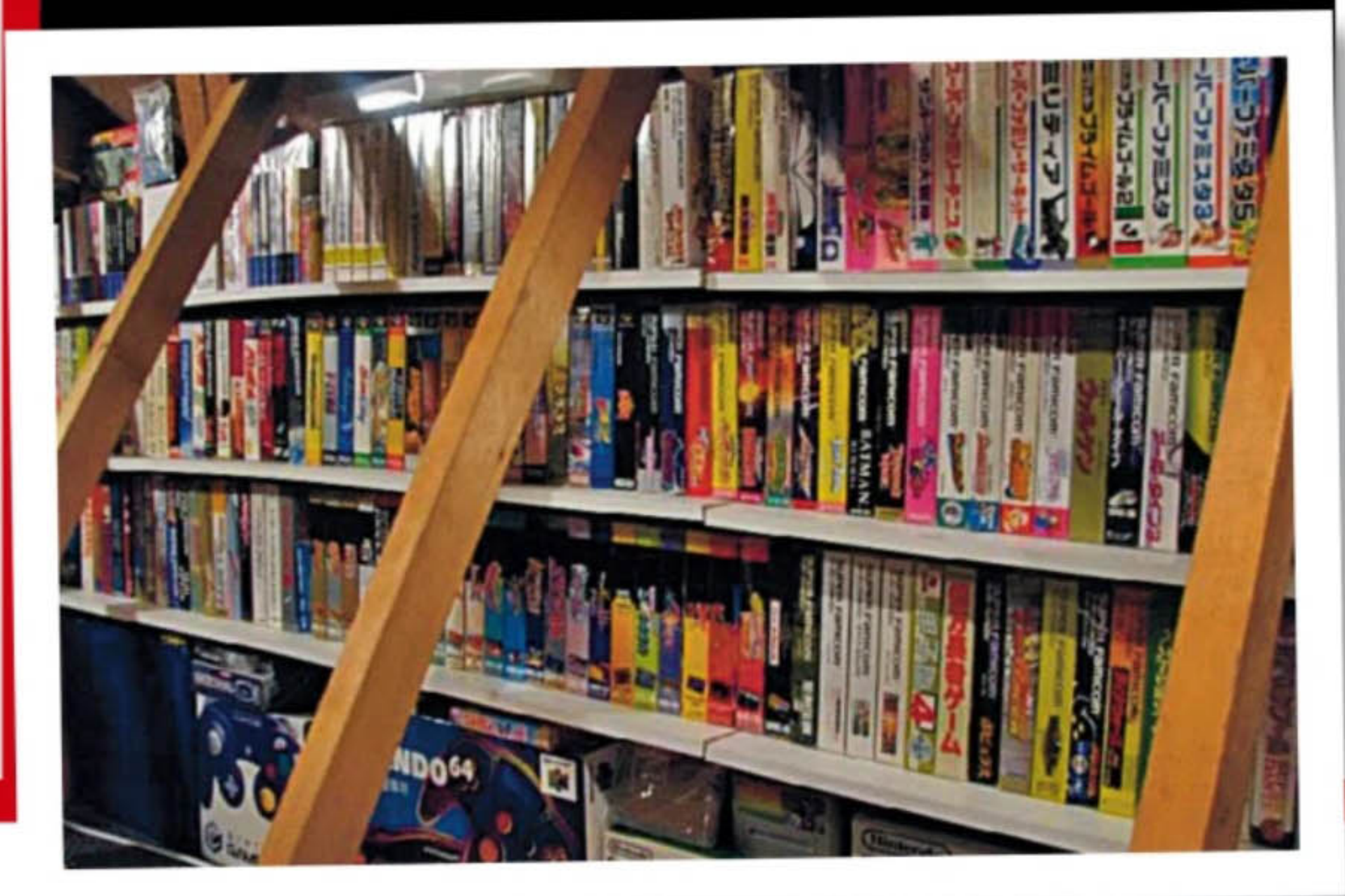
Why do you prefer collecting Japanese games to their PAL counterparts?
I swapped a PAL copy of *Pilotwings* for a SFC version of *Hook* and as soon as I saw the box and the design, you could say I was 'hooked' (sorry). The aesthetics of the Japanese designs are, in my opinion, miles ahead of the Western releases. The sheer number of titles available in Japan puts the PAL catalogue to shame. Back in the day, magazines such as *Super Play* influenced my love of Japanese gaming and Japan has such an interesting culture, I think gaming is just an extension of that interest.

What's the most expensive game you own?
Rendering Ranger R2. It goes for silly money now, I've seen copies exchange hands for £500. I was lucky and actually picked it up in 1998 on a trip for about £45 new.

How important are mint boxes to you?
I wont even consider buying a game if it isn't complete and in good condition. Nintendo weren't thinking of the future when they decided cardboard was the way to go and it's getting harder to find games in top condition now, another reason the SNES commands such high prices.

What does your family/wife think of your hobby?
My wife is very understanding of my collection and has even been know to buy me SFC games for my birthday, not that I leave my wanted list lying around deliberately.

What advice would you give to other gamers interesting in collecting for the SNES?
Decide exactly what games and condition you want them in, and set a budget. Recently the SNES/SFC has become very expensive to collect. I was lucky and got in years ago, and gathered the majority of my 550 boxed games before the price boom. Know what you're getting into.



* Rarity guide courtesy of RETRO COLLECT Head to retrocollect.com for more information

OLD!

TURN OVER FOR THE NES BOOK

The Super NES Book

All you need to know about Nintendo's game-changer

- History of Mario Kart • SNES Mini breakdown • Mode 7 moments

PAL VERSION
ON
OFF
POWER
EJECT
RESET
Nintendo
SUPER NINTENDO™
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
POWER